# Dragon® Magazine Annual

Number 2

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# Serve It Forth

The 1996 *Dragon® Magazine* Annual was our first stab at adding a regular special issue to our yearly production. We considered it a success, since there were no deaths among the staff directly attributable to the extra workload. In some ways, the Annual has become an event not unlike Thanksgiving dinner—a celebration that requires an enormous amount of effort from the cook but with a result well worth that effort. Once the letters began to arrive last year, we knew we had something worth doing again, even if the work aggravated some ulcers and prompted some, er, premature hair loss. (This year we've hired an associate editor who promptly shaved himself bald upon arrival. Clever lad.)

As this is our second Annual, we can now confidently claim that we're following the path of tradition. In fact, we're deviating only very slightly from the menu from last year. Within these pages you'll find an outstanding example of each of our eight regular departments. From James Wyatt's useful additions to the low-level illusionist's repertoire in "Arcane Lore" to the newest heroes of the Forgotten Realms® setting in Kate Novak and Jeff Grubb's "Rogue's Gallery," here are the staples of the AD&D® game diet, the new spells, magical items, characters, monsters, rules, and DMing tips that broaden your own campaign each month.

Wholesome as they are, what fun are all the rules in the world without a challenging adventure? Our sister publication, Dungeon® Adventures, cooks up a veritable banquet of AD&D game scenarios every other month, and for this special occasion we steal a bite from her plate. In a sequel to last year's "Wyrmsmere," ace designer Christopher Perkins brings us "Dragonwyr," in which your heroes—somewhat more powerful than when last they ventured beyond Neriendor—must once again defy the wishes of the green dragon Toxin. If your characters survive this one, let us know. We'll bring the old girl back again for a third course.

No matter how delicious the meal, presentation makes a world of difference. This year we're pleased to present a cover by Chesley-award–winning artist Todd Lockwood. You might remember his cover gracing our recent issue #238, and you're sure to see much more of his work in future, particularly in 1998's Alternity™ game line. The fabulous artwork doesn't stop at the edges of our cover, however. By now you've already skipped to the back and have seen, among other notables, Tony DiTerlizzi's spectacular illustrations for "Pox of the Planes," this year's addition to the Planescape® setting. Watch for issue #242 in December, when Tony demonstrates his artistic range with a beautiful cover in a different but no less fantastic vein.

While our featured adventure and our departments tend to stick to the "generic" AD&D game, there's no denying the appetite most players have for a favorite shared-world setting, be it the glorious Birthright® campaign, the heroic Dragonlance® world, or the mysterious Ravenloft® setting. This year we offer a few special treats for dessert, served by the original creators of the Forgotten Realms and Greyhawk® settings. We'll sample the magic of the ancient elves of Myth Drannor, courtesy of Ed Greenwood, before we savor a taste of the vintage days of the Greyhawk campaign, served forth by none other than the original author of the AD&D game, Gary Gygax.

Make yourself comfortable, and prepare to partake of this year's feast. We hope you'll enjoy it so much that you'll remain with us each month throughout the coming year.

Let's eat.

Dave Gross

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# DragonMirth

By Dwain Meyer

## SWORDPLAY

By Mathew Guss

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# ARCANE LORE

# Fantastic Phantasms

by James Wyatt

**illustrated by Aaron Williams**

Many of these new illusionist spells, the work of a dual-classed thief/illusionist named Jannes, create illusions that require careful adjudication by the Dungeon Master. In cases where the saving throw is listed as "Special," the saving throw against the spell is based on disbelief, according to the guidelines for illusion spells in Chapter 7 of the *Player's Handbook*.

### Acquaintance

Illusion/Phantasm
Level: 1
Range: 10 yards
Components: V, S
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 1 person (see below)
Saving Throw: Neg.

The *acquaintance* spell creates vague recollections of previous positive association in the mind of the subject. These recollections may concern either the caster or some object touched or held by the caster, but in either case the subject must be specified and within the range of the spell when it is cast. Specific memories cannot be implanted by the spell itself, but the subject can be influenced to "remember" the circumstances of his or her earlier interaction with the caster or object through conversation.

The subject is allowed a normal saving throw when the spell is first cast. If this saving throw fails, the subject feels general good will toward the caster, even if the caster makes no further attempt to converse with the subject. The subject might approach the caster ("Don't I know you from somewhere?"), depending on circumstances and personality. An additional saving throw is allowed against the effects of the caster's suggestions. This save is adjudicated as are saves against other illusions—if the subject has reason to disbelieve the suggested memory, a save should be allowed, with penalties or bonuses based on the plausibility of the "memory." If a suggested recollection is clearly impossible (e.g., a suggestion that the subject and the caster met in a city the subject has never visited, or a suggestion that they met before the subject was born) the spell is automatically broken. In this case, the subject does not necessarily feel any hostility to the caster but might question his sanity.

The "memory" implanted by this spell can involve only casual acquaintance with the caster. Suggestions that the relationship between the subject and caster was especially significant (e.g., the caster saved the subject's life, or the two had a romantic involvement) automatically negate the spell. The spell does not allow the caster to control the behavior of the subject, only to influence the subject's memories or emotions. Regardless of any supposed memories of friendly encounter, present circumstances can always influence the subject's reactions for the worse. ("Gee, he was a nice guy back then, but he's turned into a real jerk!") The subject is in no way *charmed*, just predisposed to be friendly.

The spell affects only humans, demihumans, and those humanoids (if any exist) who are actually involved in social interaction with the caster's society.

### Anaesthesia

Illusion/Phantasm
Level: 1
Range: 20 yards
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 turn + 1 round/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Saving Throw: Neg.

Comparable to but less debilitating than the 2nd-level *blindness* and *deafness* spells, the *anaesthesia* spell creates a numbness in the affected creature, unless that creature makes a saving throw vs. spell. Unlike its more powerful relatives, this spell does not prevent the creature from receiving any sensory input, but instead affects only a certain area of the creature's body, chosen by the caster when the spell is cast, limited to one limb, one side of the torso, etc. This numbness is not immediately noticeable by the affected creature. This *anaesthesia* has several possible effects. First, if a thief is trying to lift an item from the affected area, the thief's pick pockets chance of success is increased by 35%. Second, if the caster affects a person's weapon arm or a part of a monster's body used as a natural weapon, attacks made using the affected area are at −2 to hit and damage for the duration of the spell. Third, the spell can temporarily negate any ill effects of pain suffered by the creature, if the pain is localized to a single part of the body.

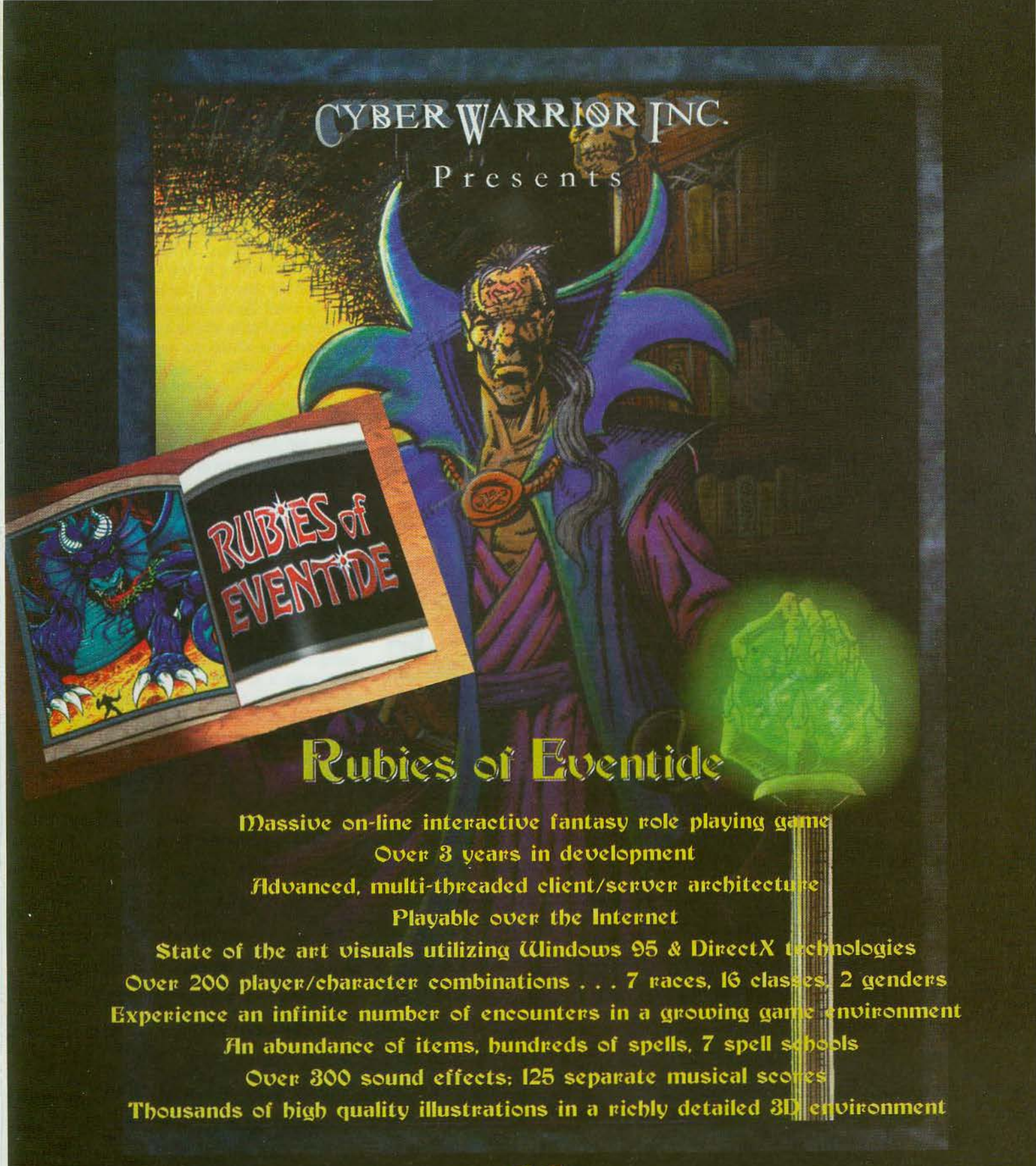
The spell can be negated before its expiration only through a *dispel magic* or by the spellcaster.

### Anosmia

Illusion/Phantasm
Level: 1
Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Saving Throw: Neg.

This spell interferes with the affected creature's sense of smell, unless the creature makes a saving throw vs. spells. The creature's sense of taste is dampened but not eliminated, as if the creature had a bad cold. Creatures who detect intruders or track by scent are unable to perform those functions while affected by *anosmia*. The spell lasts until removed by a *dispel magic* or by the caster.

The material component of the spell is a peppercorn.

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### Dancing Shadows
Illusion/Phantasm
Level: 1
Range: 60 yards + 10 yards/level
Components: S
Duration: 3 rounds/level
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: 100 sq. ft./level
Saving Throw: Special

When cast in an area of dim or flickering light, the *dancing shadows* spell causes the shadows in the area of effect to move as if alive. To creatures within the radius of the light source, the motion is indistinct, but it is almost certain to arouse suspicion that some kind of creature is lurking in the shadows. The *dancing shadows* automatically move away from a moving light source, with a preference to move away from the caster's location, but the caster does not have control over their specific movement (but neither does the caster need to concentrate on maintaining the spell). Creatures who see the *dancing shadows* receive a −1 to all surprise rolls and a −1 to morale for the duration of the spell.

Only somewhat intelligent creatures (those with an Intelligence rating of 3 or more) are affected by this spell. The saving throw is based on disbelief, as for other illusion spells.

### Engagement
Illusion/Phantasm
Level: 1
Range: 10 yards
Components: V, S
Duration: 1d4 rounds + 1 round/level
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: 1 person
Saving Throw: Neg.

The *engagement* spell causes the subject to "remember" an important commitment to be in a different place about a half-hour ago. Unless threatened or engaged in combat, the subject slaps his forehead, bolts up from his seat, and rushes out the door to this supposed previous engagement, which is some distance away, stopping suddenly after a number of rounds equal to the caster's level, as the "prior commitment" is forgotten, and spending another 1d4 rounds trying vainly to remember what it was (hence, the spell's duration). After this period the subject returns to whatever she was doing when the spell was cast.

A saving throw is allowed when the spell is cast; success negates the spell.

### Illusory Savor
Illusion/Phantasm
Level: 1
Range: 60 yards + 10 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 3 rounds/level
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: 400 sq. ft. + 100 sq. ft./level
Saving Throw: Special

This spell creates an illusion of smell or taste, according to the wishes of the caster at the time the spell is cast. An illusion of smell fills the area of effect, while an illusion of taste affects individual creatures who are within the area of effect at the time of casting. (The caster can limit the area of effect as desired but may not select individuals to be affected within the area.) A taste illusion persists for the spell's full duration, even if affected creatures leave the area of effect.

Most human, humanoid, and demihuman creatures rely on their senses of sight and (secondarily) sound, almost to the exclusion of the other senses. Therefore this spell is difficult to use effectively against such beings. Many animals and monsters, however, place much more reliance on their sense of smell and are thus easier to mislead using this spell—perhaps even more so than with a *phantasmal force* or *audible glamer*. Horses can easily be spooked by the scent of wolves or distracted by the odor of a mare in heat, while bloodhounds could be totally put off the track by a stronger and more attractive odor covering the party's trail. (This spell can duplicate the effects of such thiefly prizes as aniseed, catstink, or dog pepper—see *The Complete Thief's Handbook*, pages 99–100—or even the stench of a troglodyte or ghast.) An individual in a restaurant could be made to think something was fouling his food or drink, or poisoned food could be made to taste wholesome and normal.

Saving throws are calculated as for other illusion spells. Note particularly that the caster must have some experience of a smell to be able to reproduce it believably (particularly as regards special odors of the sort mentioned above). The material component is a bit of garlic or musk.

### Jannes' Impressive Demeanor
Illusion/Phantasm
Level: 1
Range: 0
Components: V, S
Duration: 2d6 rounds + 2 rounds/level

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Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: the caster
Saving Throw: Neg.

Similar to the *change self* spell, *Jannes' impressive demeanor* alters the appearance of the caster. The transformation is subtle, however, and does not disguise the caster. Instead, the caster simply looks much more impressive, causing all onlookers to react with a certain amount of respect or awe (adding elements of phantasm to the basic illusion). Any intelligent (3 or higher Intelligence) creature within the "Detail" visibility range (10 yards under a clear daytime sky) who looks at the caster must make a saving throw vs. spells or be awed by the caster. This awe is manifested in a desire to avoid angering or upsetting the caster, and a reluctance to initiate hostilities against this impressive figure (see also the psionic Telepathic devotion awe).

### Phantom Touch

Illusion/Phantasm
Level: 1
Range: 60 yards + 10 yards/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: 1 creature/level
Saving Throw: Special

The *phantom touch* spell creates an illusion of some sensation on the skin of the affected creature. This may be a tap, poke, soft caress, sting, or scratch, for example. Pain may be caused, but not enough to inflict damage or break the concentration of a spellcaster. As with *illusory savor,* this is less effective on a creature relying on its sense of sight (though a tap on the shoulder, as if from behind, can be an appropriate distraction) but becomes much more formidable if the affected creature is in complete darkness or blinded. The caster can affect one creature per experience level. The entire outer skin surface of an affected character is vulnerable to this illusion. The illusion can be maintained as long as desired, as long as the caster concentrates on doing so to the exclusion of other activities (i.e., *phantasmal force*).

Saving throws are calculated as for other illusion spells. The material components are a wisp of fine cloth and a piece of bark.

### Shadow Cloak

Illusion/Phantasm
Level: 1
Range: 0
Components: S, M
Duration: 1 round + 1 round/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Saving Throw: None

When the *shadow cloak* spell is cast, shadows in the area gather around the creature touched (or the caster), concealing the subject. This effect allows the creature to hide in shadows as a thief with the chance of success of an average thief of the caster's level (see Table 19 in the *Dungeon Master™ Guide*), modified by race and Dexterity according to the tables in the *Player's Handbook*. Thus, a 4th-level caster would bestow the ability to hide with a 25% chance of success. If the recipient of the spell is a thief, the thief's hiding ability is increased by 6% per level of the caster—so a 4th-level mage could give an average 7th-level thief a 67% (43% + |4 × 6% = 24%| = 67%) chance to hide in shadows, or slightly worse than an average 11th-level thief! No character can have more than a 95% chance to hide in shadows through the use of this spell.

This spell fails in broad daylight or total darkness, only in situations of dim or flickering light. The material component is a small square of gray cloth.

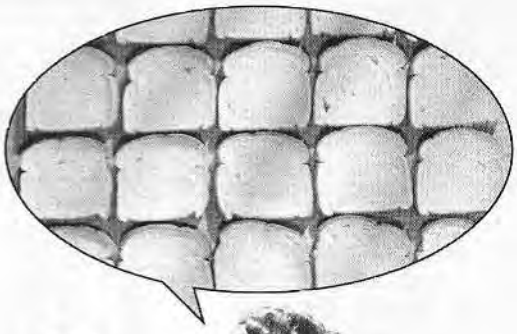
### False Thoughts

Illusion/Phantasm
Level: 2
Range: 0
Components: V, S
Duration: 8 hours
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: The caster
Saving Throw: Neg.

When this spell is cast, the caster's thoughts are protected from reading (through spells such as *ESP* or a psionicist's telepathic abilities) by a shield of false thoughts. These illusionary thoughts always seem benign and uninteresting, but they are appropriate to the circumstances and fully believable.

Anyone trying to read the caster's thoughts through magical or psionic means is allowed a saving throw vs. spell to penetrate the false thoughts. If this save is successful, the caster's true thoughts can be read.

*James Wyatt is a freelance game designer who eats thanks to a day job as a technical writer and multimedia guy. He lives in Middleton, WI, with his wife, Amy, their son, Carter, and two dogs.*



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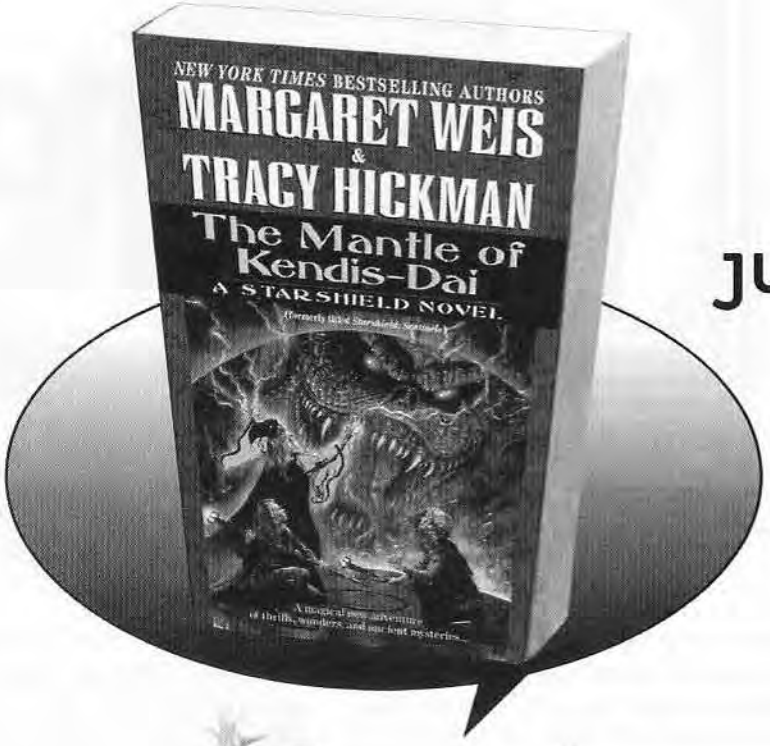

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# Bazaar of the Bizarre

## Magical Cups & Flasks

by Oren Schnurr

**illustrated by Chris Adams**

The AD&D® game abounds with magical potions, philtres, elixirs, and oils. Their value and variety reflect the importance of drinks and oils in everyday life. It is strange, then, that the containers that hold these liquids are largely ignored. What good is rain in the desert if you don't have a basin in which to catch it before it soaks into the sand?

Legends and traditions have lent great importance to cups, pitchers, and other containers for liquids. The most celebrated item in the *Arabian Nights* looked like a lamp for maintaining and burning oil. Arthurian knights sought a simple cup called the Holy Grail as the most valuable relic in existence. When Oliver Cromwell melted down the crown jewels of England, the only item he allowed to survive was a pitcher used to anoint the king during the coronation.

Naturally, something on the order of Aladdin's lamp would quickly unbalance any campaign, but the containers presented in this article can add spice to any AD&D game and be a boon to clever PCs who realize that, sometimes, the magic is not in the potion but in that which holds it.

### Bartender's Friend

A *bartender's friend* can come in nearly any form, from a porcelain mug, to a glass bottle, to a wooden keg. The command words for such an item are usually simple and obvious words in the common tongue or the language of the item's creator (i.e., "heat," "stir," etc.) A bartender's friend may be commanded to steadily heat or cool its contents at a rate of 10 degrees Fahrenheit per round until commanded to stop and then maintains that temperature until it is emptied or a new command word is spoken. It cannot reach a temperature above 212 degrees nor drop below 32 degrees

Another command word mixes its contents homogeneously but will not keep them mixed afterward. For example, oil and water separates again at a normal rate). Finally, a *bartender's friend* may be commanded to fill itself to the top with whatever liquid or combination of liquids is contained within it at that time. This final ability may generate no more than one gallon of liquid each day and functions only for nonmagical, drinkable liquids. Thus, magical potions, poisons, dragon blood, and the like can not be generated in this manner. Only one command may be used each turn (not counting commands to stop heating or cooling), but there is no limit to the number of times the item can function. *Bartender's friends* are especially valued in hot desert countries, where a glass of good, chilled wine may be worth more than gold to a decadent Pasha. In more temperate climes, mages sometimes give them to innkeepers in exchange for very special services.

**XP Value:** 1,000 **GP Value:** 3,000

### Cormian's Viewing Bowl

This container's powers do not function unless the bowl is filled with pure water and stands undisturbed, so that the waters are still, with no ripples. Once these conditions are met, the bowl's magic may be activated by speaking the proper command word and dropping a bit of blood or earth into the water. The blood or earth must come from a single creature or location; if contaminated

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with matter from any other source, nothing is revealed. As the ripples from the blood or earth dissipate, an image of the location or creature and immediate surroundings magically appears in the waters. These scenes last until the water is disturbed again. Creatures viewed this way have a chance to detect the scrying as if they were being viewed through a *crystal ball.*

It is believed that the mage-king Cormian was the first to create a *viewing bowl.* He changed the punishment for many crimes to blood letting and used the bowl to discover criminals' associates and meeting places. Once he was sure of their identities and locations, Cormian managed to eliminate every major thieves' guild and other criminal organization in his capital city in a single day of carefully planned raids.

**XP Value:** 750 **GP Value:** 3,500

### Flask of Delusion

This item can appear as any sort of potion flask and is almost always found full of some liquid. The flask itself faintly radiates magic of an indeterminable nature, but any liquid kept inside it radiates magic very strongly as long as it is within the flask. Even after being poured from the flask, the liquid continues to radiate magic for one round per hour that it was stored inside, up to a maximum of six days. The magical aura surrounding the "potion" behaves exactly as though it were affected by a *Nystul's magical aura* spell, except that the duration is as noted above. Fully 20 percent of such flasks also cause the "potion" inside to bubble mysteriously and glow with a faint, pulsing light. These visual effects last as long as the magic aura. Real potions poured into a *flask of delusion* are affected the same as any other liquid, but they still function as usual, regardless of the presence of the false aura.

The first *flasks of delusion* are generally attributed to an elf who called himself Lufrednow. He became notorious for filling used potion flasks with grape juice and trying to pass them off as magical potions. He eventually created *potion makers* to make his ruse more believable. Since then, numerous profiteers have duplicated his efforts, and many *potion makers* now appear in intelligent monsters' treasure hoards or garbage heaps, beside the bones of charlatans who were too smart (and too slow) for their own good.

**XP Value:** 100; 200 w/visual effects
**GP Value:** 500; 1,000 w/visual effects

### Goblet of the Emperor

The royal goblet of Emperor Terrin the First, designed by Lord High Wizard Martea Nollin, was supposed to be unique, but Martea actually made a total of five such goblets. The first was forged in the perfect shape to receive his magics, without attention to aesthetic detail. After that, he improved on each cup design until he finally managed to create one forged in the shape of a leviathan, the personal symbol of the emperor. Rumors that other mages have modeled goblets with similar powers after Martea's first design are unconfirmed. In any case, these rare goblets are always masterfully crafted from gold and platinum studded with tiny diamonds. They are without exception magnificent and ostentatious. Three brilliant sapphires are set around the lip of a *goblet of the emperor,* each seeming to glow with an inner light. Everything that enters this goblet is subjected to the equivalent of the *purify food and drink* and *neutralize poison* spells. If the goblet contains contaminated liquid even for an instant, one of the sapphires turns black; if it contains poison, two turn black. If it contains a magical potion (or dissolved magical powder, etc.), the third sapphire changes color to represent the magical aura of the contents (colorless for Illusion/Phantasm; brown for Conjuration/Summoning; red for Invocation/Evocation; orange for Divination; yellow for Enchantment/Charm; green for Alteration; violet for Abjuration; black for Necromancy; white for indeterminable or no school). All appropriate colors appear separately rather than mixed, so if the contents of the cup project auras of Abjuration and Necromancy magic, one half of the gem turns violet and the other half turns black. In any case, the discoloration of each sapphire slowly fades back to blue once the offending substance is removed or *neutralized.*

With the proper command word, the goblet can *dispel magic* on its contents only. This power may be used any number of times. Once a day, with another command word, the goblet may be used in a toast that will *enthrall* or *bless* (the goblet holder chooses which) a group of listeners. Once a year, yet another command word gives such a toast the force of a *limited wish.*

**XP Value:** 6,000 **GP Value:** 75,000

### Water Purifier

These beautiful pitchers are almost always made of fine crystal, though glass or porcelain versions are also possible. Any liquid kept in such a pitcher for at least one turn is purified, as per the *purify food and drink* spell. At the same time, it is cooled somewhat (to approximately five degrees Farhenheit below room temperature), and its taste is slightly improved (usually made slightly sweeter). After the first turn, the pitcher maintains the temperature of its contents so long as they remain within it.

These pitchers are surprisingly simple to make, largely due to the research of a lone hedge wizard named Ezmerelda Northington, who one day took it upon herself to do something about her town's murky, foul-tasting well water. Unfortunately, a side effect of the simple creation process is that the pitcher doesn't distinguish between "contaminants." It treats all liquids (including juice, milk, ale, etc.) as contaminated water for purposes of its *purify food and drink* spell. Thus, a pitcher full of expensive wine turns into pure, sweet, cool water within a single turn.

**XP Value:** 250 **GP Value:** 1,000

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### Potion Cloaker

A *potion cloaker* is a rare item designed to sneak potions into areas where magical items are not allowed—or out of places where they are supposed to stay. Any container that can be sealed, from a leather wineskin, to a glass bottle, to a crystal vial, may serve as a *potion cloaker.* Such items radiate alteration magic whenever their power is not in use, but when the proper command word is spoken, the *potion cloaker* actually displaces its magic in time, along with that of any liquid inside it. Both the potion cloaker and its liquid contents immediately lose all their magical properties and, in fact, become completely non-magical. Normally, magics lost in this way are restored after 1d6 turns, even if the nonmagical *potion cloaker* passes through anti-magic areas, is targeted by *dispel magic,* etc. If the *potion cloaker* comes in contact with anti-magic when the magic is due to be restored, the magic cannot return and is lost forever. Further, every time a *potion cloaker* is used, there is a 5% chance that the potion inside it loses its enchantment permanently, and a further 5% chance that both potion and container become completely nonmagical. Note also that magic is restored only to the *potion cloaker* itself and whatever fraction of the original potion remains within it.

Firias Bloodstone is credited with the most dramatic use of a *potion cloaker.* During the reign of King Marcus III, she used one to smuggle a *potion of invulnerability* past various anti-magic wards, quaffed it when its magic had returned, and proceeded to bowl over several dozen of the king's suddenly harmless guards. As a finale, she took Marcus hostage in his own throne room and escaped with a king's ransom (literally).

**XP Value:** 1,500 **GP Value:** 7,500

### Security Vial

Any liquid kept inside a *security vial* is held in stasis, never souring or aging, so long as the vial remains closed. Furthermore, though it appears to be made from fragile glass or crystal, a *security vial* is nigh indestructible. It need not make item saving throws except under the most extreme circumstances, makes all such saving throws at +4, and uses the item saving throws for metal in every category except acid (for which it saves as rock crystal, with its usual +4 bonus). The stopper for a security vial forms an airtight and watertight seal with the opening and can be opened

only by an intelligent being making an active attempt to open it.

According to the legend of Skagrir, the powerful troll lord said to be larger and stronger than a giant, a pint of the horrid creature's blood was poured into a *security vial* when the rest of the body was destroyed. The legend indicates that Skagrir's life force is strong enough to regenerate its entire body from this single pint of blood in less than a year. The whereabouts of this *vial,* if it in fact exists, are unknown.

**XP Value:** 800 **GP Value:** 4,000

### Martyr Glass

This item always appears as a simple crystal wineglass. Despite a faint aura of conjuration magic, it reveals no magical properties until it is physically shattered. At this time, the creature who breaks it, and any creatures within 25 feet who wish that creature well, receive the benefits of a *bless* spell. The real importance of a *martyr glass,* however, is its role at the center of a complex ceremony. The type of ceremony varies from glass to glass (much like command words) but generally requires at least five participants, and always culminates with one person swearing a solemn oath before shattering the *martyr glass.* At this point, the person who broke the glass receives the benefits of a *bless* spell so long as he keeps his oath. Furthermore, he is responsible for keeping the oath as if under the sixth-level wizard spell *geas.* Note that these *bless* effects are not cumulative with each other nor with other *bless* spells or effects.

Priests of numerous religions have created and used *martyr glasses* for various reasons, most often for ceremonies of initiation into particularly high ranks in the priesthood.

**XP Value:** 1,000 **GP Value:** 4,000

### Courtier's Bane

This item appears to be an ordinary crystal wine glass, but when the proper command word is spoken, the wine inside the glass becomes a poison (40% type G, 30% type H, 20% type I, 10% type J; roll once for each item, not for each time the command word is used). A different command word changes the wine into a *potion of healing* instead (heals 2d4+2 hp damage). The glass may transform only one glass of wine per day and is effective only when it is mostly full with truly excellent wine. The wine's color is not changed by the transformation, and the taste and smell change very little, though a *detect magic* spell reveals that the transformed wine radiates alteration magic. A single person must consume more than half of the transformed wine directly from the *courtier's bane* itself for the concoction to have any effect. Thus, if poured into another glass before someone drinks it, the wine loses its healing or poisonous properties.

The first *courtier's bane* was created when a powerful queen asked the wisest mage in her court for a way to transform wine into deadly poison. Unwilling to create something that could be used only for harm, the mage built a wineglass with both poisoning and healing powers—and later used it to save the queen's life.

**XP Value:** 1,000 **GP Value:** 5,000

*Oren Schnurr has recently been working as an intern at R.Talsorian Games, in California.*

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# Mindscapes of Athas and Beyond

## Updates for Both Core and PLAYER'S OPTION™ Rules

by Dale Donovan and Bill Slavicsek

illustrated by Steve Bryant

Since the publication of *The Way of the Psionicist: Psionic Abilities and Powers* (from the *DARK SUN® Expanded and Revised Campaign Setting*) and the AD&D® game's *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Skills and Powers* book, we discovered that a few concepts needed clarification, a few rules needed adjustments, and a few omitted items needed to be included. This article addresses all of these needs, and the updated material presented here should be considered "official" changes to the original PLAYER'S OPTION and DARK SUN material. In addition, you'll also find new material herein, including a complete character-point PC-generation system for psionic characters. Of course, if you're happy with the system as it is, you needn't add rules that you don't like. Use the rules that appeal to you and work for your game, and freely ignore the rest, for that is the spirit of the PLAYER'S OPTION products.

As you read the following pages, you'll notice some new terms that haven't appeared before. The most important of these is the *critical mental hit*, an attack that allows the immediate opening of a closed mind. The PLAYER'S OPTION psionics system is designed to work just as physical combat in the AD&D game—a rule mechanic that everyone who plays the AD&D game knows how to use and understands implicitly.

The same rules apply to psionics, giving psionicists and wild talent player-characters MTHAC0s (mental attack numbers) and MACs (mental armor classes). In physical combat, if a 3rd-level fighter decides to take on a 10th-level warrior, he had better have some companions to help him, or he's going to lose the battle. The 10th-level warrior has a better THAC0, better weapons and armor, and more hit points than his 3rd-level opponent. The same holds true when two psionicists enter psionic combat.

### Psionic Combat

Psionic combat is used by psionicists to "open" closed minds so that other psionic powers can be employed against them. Such combat between psionicists should be a rare and momentous occasion, full of danger for both participants. During combat in the physical world, when a warrior of higher level confronts a lower-level fighter, the higher-level warrior has a distinct advantage. The same holds true for battles on the psionic plane (also referred to as the *mindscape*).

When attacking a nonpsionic mind (a character with no PSP pool), one successful attack opens the target's mind.

A psionic mind under attack remains closed until it is reduced to 0 PSPs, unless the attacker achieves a critical mental hit.

#### Achieving a Critical Mental Hit

To achieve a critical mental hit and immediately open a closed mind, the attacker must meet three conditions:

**1.** The attacker must roll a natural 18, 19, or 20 when making the MTHAC0 roll.

**2.** The roll must exceed the target number by 5 or more.

**3.** Either the target must fail a saving throw vs. paralyzation *or* the attacker must cause damage equal to or exceeding 25% of the defender's PSP pool maximum total. This means that the attacker must determine damage first, to show whether a saving throw is allowed.

**Example:** *A 3rd-level psionicist with an MTHAC0 of 18 can achieve a critical mental hit against a target with a MAC 3, since he can roll a 20 and hit that target and exceed the "5 or more" rule. He can't achieve a*

*critical mental hit against a target with a MAC 2 (or better), however, as he cannot meet that same "5 or more" stipulation.*

**Example:** *Ulcen achieves a critical mental hit on Fenka, rolling a natural 18 or higher and exceeding the target number by 5 or more. Fenka has a maximum of 40 PSPs. She must fail her saving throw vs. paralyzation or Ulcen must inflict enough mental damage to cause Fenka to lose 25% of her PSP maximum in a single attack (10 or more PSPs in this case) for Fenka's mind to become opened. Fenka can attempt a save if the damage is less than 25% of her PSP maximum (10 PSPs), but not if it's equal to 25% or more.*

## The Five Psionic Attacks

The following changes have been made to the five psionic attacks.

❖ **Ego Whip** inflicts 2–7 points of psionic damage (1d6+1) for every 4 PSPs the attacker spends. The maximum damage is limited by the attacker's level: a 3rd-level psionicist can spend up to 12 PSPs (cost × level = 4 × 3 = 12) for 3d6+3 points of damage.

❖ **Id Insinuation** inflicts 3–10 points of psionic damage (1d8+2) for every 6 PSPs the attacker spends. This is limited by the attacker's level; a 3rd-level psionicist can spend up to 18 PSPs (cost × level = 6 x 3 = 18) for 3d8+6 points of damage.

❖ **Mind Thrust** inflicts 1–4 points of psionic damage (1d4) for every 2 PSPs the attacker spends. This is limited by the attacker's level; a 3rd-level psionicist can spend up to 6 PSPs (cost × level = 2 × 3 = 6) for 3d4 points of damage.

❖ **Psionic Blast** inflicts 5–16 points of psionic damage (1d12+4) for every 10 PSPs the attacker spends. This is limited by the attacker's level; a 3rd-level psionicist can spend up to 30 PSPs (cost × level = 10 × 3 = 30) for 3d12+12 points of damage.

❖ **Psychic Crush** inflicts 4–13 points of psionic damage (1d10+3) for every 8 PSPs the attacker spends. This is limited by the attacker's level; a 3rd-level psionicist can spend up to 24 PSPs (cost × level = 8 × 3 = 24) for 3d10+9 points of damage.

**Psionic Attack Reminder:** It is strongly recommended that every player and DM create a set of psionic combat cards—with the name of each attack and defense written on a separate index card. To secretly indicate how many PSPs you want to spend on an attack, place a die that shows the number you want to multiply the effect by. For example, if you want to multiply the effect of a mind thrust by 3 (at a cost of 6 PSPs), place a die with a 3 showing.

**Psionic Attacks Rules Change:** The number of PSPs an attacker puts into a psionic attack must be declared before the attack roll is made. The cost for failing the attack is one-half of the declared PSPs.

**Example:** *Ulcen decides to attack with a mind thrust. (His player places a mind thrust card face down in front of him.) He's a 4th-level psionicist, and he wants to put everything he can into the attack. (His player sets 1d6 under the card, hiding the face-up 4, his limit as determined by his level.) The base cost of a mind thrust is 2, so if the attack succeeds, Ulcen must pay 8 PSPs (2 × 4 = 8) for 4d4 points of psionic damage. If the attack fails, the cost to Ulcen is 4 PSPs (8 ÷ 2 = 4).*

## The Open Mind

When a mind is voluntarily opened, there is no adverse effect (unless the psionicist uses a power that causes one).

When a mind is forced open by psionic attack, however, the target suffers because of it.

An opened mind is vulnerable to psionic powers; the round in which a mind is opened, the attacker can use a psionic power on it.

A mind that has been forced open (such as when suffering from a mental critical hit) is stunned. The victim receives a +2 penalty to his or her initiative in the next round (only), and in that round he or she can spend PSPs to become closed. If the opened mind doesn't have enough PSPs, it remains open for 1d4+1 rounds (see below).

## Closing the Open Mind

Closing a non-psionic mind hasn't changed. See page 10 in *The Way of the Psionicist* (*WotP*) or page 149 in the *Skills & Powers* (*S&P*) book.

Here are the new rules for closing a psionic mind.

If the mind was opened by a critical mental hit, the target can close its mind in the following round by spending PSPs equal to double the cost of the last defense it used. So, if a mind was opened in the round it used the mental barrier defense (costs 5 PSPs), it can close its mind in the next round by spending 10 PSPs (5 x 2 = 10).

If the mind opened by a critical mental hit doesn't have enough PSPs remaining or doesn't want to spend them, it remains open for 1d4+1 rounds. After that, a successful Wisdom check with a −3 penalty closes the mind. One check can be made per round.

Rules concerning a mind opened by reducing it to 0 PSPs remain the same (page 11 of *WotP* and page 149 of *S&P*).

## Psionic Attacks vs. Psionic Defenses

When a psionic attack clashes with a psionic defense, use the attack tables in either version of the revised psionic rules to find the attacker's modifier. The modifier is applied to the attacker's MTHAC0 roll.

**Example:** *Fenka attacks Ulcen with a psychic crush. Ulcen defends with a thought shield. The resulting modifier is −4. This is applied to Fenka's MTHAC0 roll. She needs a 14 or better. She rolls a 16. 16 − 4 = 12. Ulcen's defense holds, and Fenka's attack fails.*

## Speed of Psionics

Psionic combat literally takes place at the speed of thought. Psionic attacks are made at the point in the combat round determined by the initiative roll for that PC. The psionic defense chosen by the PC remains in effect for the entirety of the combat round, regardless of the PC's initiative result.

Psionic powers require more concentrated effort, in many cases affecting the physical world or even the body of the psionicist herself. Some DMs may feel that psionicists have an unfair advantage over spellcasters in that the psionic powers have no initiative modifiers like the casting times for magical and clerical spells. (On the other hand, spellcasters seldom have to roll dice to determine if their spells work every time they attempt to use them, which all psionicists must do with all their devotions and sciences.)

For those DMs who wish to impose a few "speed bumps" in the paths of psionic PCs, the following initiative modifiers can be applied. Using a psionic devotion adds a +1 penalty to the psionicist' initiative; employing a psionic science incurs a +3 penalty to the initiative result.

For example, if Fenka's player gets a 3 on her d10 initiative roll and Fenka successfully uses the detonate science on a zombie, the effect of the power will not occur until the "6" portion of the round (3 + 3 = 6).

## Monsters & Psionics

With the exceptions of the *Dark Sun Monstrous Compendium Volume Two* and the *Monstrous Compendium® Annual, Volume Three*, no MTHAC0 or MAC statistics exist for psionic-using monsters in the AD&D game. The reason for this omission is that the Player's Option psionics system is a strictly optional variant of the one in the *Complete Psionics Handbook*. To help convert creatures from *CPH* rules to the Player's Option rules, here is a quick system for determining the MTHAC0 of any psionic creature in the game.

### Quick MACs for Monsters

To determine a monster's MAC (Mental Armor Class), find its Intelligence on **Table 1.** This provides a range for the monster's base MAC score. Then roll for a MAC modifier on either **Table 2** (for a creature with psionic abilities beyond those of a wild talent) or **Table 3** (for creatures with psionic abilities equivalent to wild talents or nonpsionic beings).

### Quick MTHAC0s for Monsters

Finding a monster's MTHAC0 score requires three steps:

**1. Determine the Base MTHAC0**

The base MTHAC0 (Mental "To hit Armor Class 0") of any psionic creature is based on the creature's level, as found in the Monstrous Compendium (*MC*) or Monstrous Manual (*MM*) books. For example, a psionic mind flayer (*MM*/251) is a 10th-level monster, so it has the same MTHAC0 as a 10th-level psionicist. (See *S&P*/149 or *WotP*/15 to determine psionicists' MTHAC0 scores). The chart gives the base MTHAC0 for a 10th-level psionicist of 11. Note that a monster's level is not equivalent to its Hit Dice.

**2. Modify MTHAC0 for Intelligence**

Next, this base MTHAC0 is modified by the creature's Intelligence. Consult **Table 4.** In the case of the psionic mind flayer, the creature's genius-level Intelligence gives a bonus of −2 for a modified MTHAC0 of 9.

**3. Determine Mental Armor Class**

Completing the conversion of the psionic mind flayer to the *S&P* psionics system is simple. Determine the individual creature's MAC using the charts above. The number of disciplines, devotions, sciences, psionic attacks, and psionic defenses remain the same for simplicity. The Power Score is replaced with the target's or the psionic power's MAC score, and the number of PSPs is determined as described.

Note that inherently psionic creatures such as the mind flayer being discussed here needn't follow all the rules regarding the arrangement of psionic disciplines, sciences, and devotions that PCs do. Just as some creatures have magical, spell-like abilities (such as the magical mind flayer and most dragons, as two examples) that do not follow the rules of magely or priestly spellcasting, so too do some creatures possess psionic powers that operate in the same "rule-breaking" manner.

Therefore, the *S&P* psionic mind flayer (or at least this particular illithid) from the Monstrous Manual is as follows:

### Mind Flayer

**MTHAC0:** 11
**MAC:** 2
**Psionic Attacks:** Ego Whip, Id Insinuation (as listed in the *MM;* the *S&P* system gives a 10th-level psionicist all five psionic attacks).
**Psionic Defenses:** All
**Psionic Proficiencies:** Contact (necessary for all psionicists), plus others if the DM so chooses
**Disciplines:** 4
**Sciences:** 5
**Devotions:** 15 PSPs: 50 + 3d10*
Psychokinesis
Devotions: control body, levitation
Psychometabolism
Sciences: body equilibrium
Psychoportation
Sciences: probability travel, teleport
Devotions: astral projection.
Telepathy
Sciences: domination, mindlink.
Devotions: awe, ESP, post-hypnotic suggestion.

* This PSP number differs significantly from the total given in the Monstrous Manual tome. The number was reduced to bring the illithid more in line with Player's Option psionicists. While an illithid should be a terrifying opponent, a mind flayer with 300+ PSPs is far too powerful.

**Table 1: Base MAC**

| Intelligence | Base MAC |
|---|---|
| Non- (0) | 5–6 |
| Animal (1–2) | 5–6 |
| Semi- (3–4) | 7–8 |
| Low (5–7) | 8–9 |
| Average (8–10) | 8–10 |
| Very (11–12) | 8–9 |
| High (13–14) | 7–8 |
| Exceptional (15–16) | 6–7 |
| Genius (17–18) | 5–6 |
| Supra (19–20) | 4–5 |
| Godlike (21+) | 2–3 |

**Table 2: Quick MACs for High-Psionic Creatures**

| Roll 1d10 | Modifier |
|---|---|
| 1–2 | +1 MAC |
| 3–4 | No modifier |
| 5–6 | −1 MAC |
| 7–8 | −2 MAC |
| 9 | −3 MAC |
| 10 | −4 |

**Table 3: MAC Quick MACs for Low-Psionic Creatures**

| Roll 1d10 | Modifier |
|---|---|
| 1 | +2 MAC |
| 2–3 | +1 MAC |
| 4–5 | No modifier |
| 6–8 | −1 MAC |
| 9 | −2 MAC |
| 10 | −3 MAC |

**Table 4: MTHAC0 Modifier**

| Intelligence | Modifier |
|---|---|
| < Exceptional | None |
| Exceptional | −1 bonus |
| Genius | −2 bonus |
| Supra-genius | −3 bonus |
| Godlike | −4 bonus |

### Additional Notes on Converting Psionics Monsters to S&P Rules

To determine the "new" PSP totals for psionic monsters in the MM tome and other published sources, treat the creature as an *S&P* psionicist equal to the creature's given level and calculate the being's PSPs as such [(15 PSPs at 1st level + any Intelligence bonus) + (1d6 + applicable Int bonus)/level]. The chart for determining PSP bonuses appears on *S&P*/144.

For a more detailed treatment of any such psionic creature or a major psionic villain in a campaign, a DM can treat the being fully as a psionicist, following all

the PC-creation and advancement rules for psionics given in the PLAYER'S OPTION rules (or those provided below). This puts all psionicists, whether human or illithid, PC or NPC, on more even ground.

For other creatures that are not given any psionics statistics, or even those that may not "officially" possess psionics, the guidelines below detail how to determine the creature's MTHAC0. (The creature's MAC can be determined as above.)

For Non- to Semi-Intelligent creatures, possessing psionic capabilities is normally impossible. While some few exceptions to this rule exist (such as the brain mole, yellow mold, gray ooze, and the thought eater), these beings evolved to occupy the specific ecological niche of psionic predators. Most Non-Intelligent creatures are considered to be mindless and thus immune to many but not all psionic effects (see below).

Creatures of Low to High Intelligence that are determined to possess psionics use the MTHAC0 table are limited to wild-talent status are their psionic abilities must follow all pertinent rules. The "level" of such wild talents equals the creature's Hit Dice minus two (HD – 2).

Creatures of Exceptional to Godlike Intelligence use the psionicist MTHAC0 table, with their HD – 2 determining their base level, modified by consulting the MTHAC0 Modifiers chart given above. These beings may be wild talents or full-fledged psionicists as determined by the DM. In either case, these beings still use the psionicist MTHAC0 chart.

### Psionics vs. Undead & Mindless Creatures

Questions have been raised over whether psionic powers effect the undead and mindless creatures. These are really two separate–if sometimes overlapping–subjects.

As the existence of the psionic lich (*MC Annual, Vol. One*) demonstrates that a sentient undead mind can still use psionics. It's a logical extension to assume that psionics are totally effective against intelligent (rated above Non-) undead such as liches, vampires, mummies, shadows, and so on. These and all other intelligent undead beings are susceptible to psionics powers and psionic attacks. Against the latter, their minds are considered nonpsionic, closed minds unless the undead possesses some psionic abilities itself. Some DMs may consider the unliving nature of such creatures' minds to be a hindrance to the efforts of PC psionics users; in this case, granting the undead a –2 MAC bonus is not unreasonable.

Non-Intelligent undead (such as zombies and skeletons) and all other mindless creatures are handled differently. Such beings cannot be attacked psionically, as they have no minds to assault and thus no MAC and no PSPs. They are, however, vulnerable to the physical effects of psionic powers. A skeleton and a violet fungus would both be immune to a psychic crush psionic attack, but both would be vulnerable to the detonate psychokinetic science.

## Psionicists & Character Points

Many AD&D game players have asked why the revised psionics system in the *PLAYER'S OPTION: Skills & Powers* book didn't include a character-point PC generation system like those for the other classes. The answer is that there were several reasons; the first was space. A lot of information was crammed into the *Skills & Powers* book, and there wasn't any more room. Another reason was that the PLAYER'S OPTION line was always intended to be modular, allowing players and DMs to use the new rules that they liked without locking them into a lot more rules they might not want to incorporate into their games. And the focus of the new psionics system was the rules, not Character Points. Perhaps the most important reason, though, was that we wanted the two versions of this system (one in *Skills & Powers* and the other in the revised DARK SUN boxed set) to be identical. This would keep confusion over the new rules to a minimum. Once we decided the two versions of our new rules had to be identical, that ruled out a character-point generation system since the DARK SUN set did not deal with Character Points in any way.

Unfortunately, this left *Skills & Powers* users without a means to create psionicist and wild-talent PCs using the Character-Point system. Since this article discusses rules suggestions for the PLAYER'S OPTION psionics rules, the information below is presented to fill that gap. Thanks to *DRAGON® Magazine's* own Skip "Sage Advice" Williams and reader Emery Wilson for blazing part of this particular trail. It should be noted, though, that the rules below differ significantly from what has been published previously.

### The Basics

The PC's ability scores are determined by the DM's choice of generation methods listed in the *Skills & Powers* book. Similarly, subabilities (if used), backgrounds, and racial abilities are determined per the existing *Skills & Powers* rules.

### Class Abilities

A psionicist receives 30 Character Points to spend on class abilities. Abilities cost 5–15 points each. Any unspent points (up to five) can be spent later in the character-creation process or retained for use during the game.

All psionicists use the saving-throw and MTHAC0 tables on *S&P*/149 and the Experience Levels table on *S&P*/144.

Further, psionicist PCs use the THAC0 chart on the same page, unless they purchase superior combat abilities described below. All psionicist PCs also use the Psionic Progression table on *S&P*/154, unless they purchase additional psionic capabilities as described below.

Psionicists use six-sided dice to determine their hit points, unless they purchase superior dice below.

Unless stated otherwise, each of the abilities below can be purchased only once and only during the character-creation process.

**Armor Use (5/10):** For 5 points, the psionicist can employ small shields and padded, leather, hide, or studded leather armor. As a 10-point ability, the psionicist can use the above plus medium shields and brigandine, chain mail, ring mail, scale mail, or metal lamellar armor. If the psionicist does not choose this ability at all, the character can wear no armor and employ no shields whatsoever.

**Bonus Psionic Attack (10):** The psionicist has one more psionic attack (of the player's choice) than his level normally would allow. This does not grant the PC any extra attacks in a combat round, nor does it allow the PC any extra psionic defenses or powers.

For example, a 1st-level psionicist with this ability would possess two psionic attacks and one psionic defense rather than one of each. This ability is useless without the "Contact" ability below.

**Bonus Psionic Defense (10):** The psionicist has one additional psionic defense than normal for the character's level. This does not grant the PC any extra psionic attacks or powers. For instance, a 1st-level psionicist with this ability would possess one attack and two defenses instead of one attack and one defense. This ability is worthless without the "Contact" ability below.

**Combat Bonus (10):** The psionicist now uses the priest's THAC0 chart for physical combat.

**Contact (5/10):** This ability costs five Character Points for psionicist PCs and 10 Character Points for wild-talent characters. The character with this ability receives the contact nonweapon proficiency and gains psionic attacks and defenses as in the *Skills & Powers* book. This ability can be purchased at any point in the PC's career when sufficient Character Points are available. Note that wild-talent characters can never possess more than three psionic attacks and three psionic defenses whereas psionicists can gain all five of each.

A psionic character without this ability cannot engage in psionic combat as the PC has no means to contact other minds and no way to defend himself from outside psionic attack. Therefore, the character is considered to be a closed, nonpsionic mind for purposes of psionic combat. In other words, a single successful psionic attack roll (i.e., defeating the character's MAC) opens the PC's mind to further invasion by any psionic attacker.

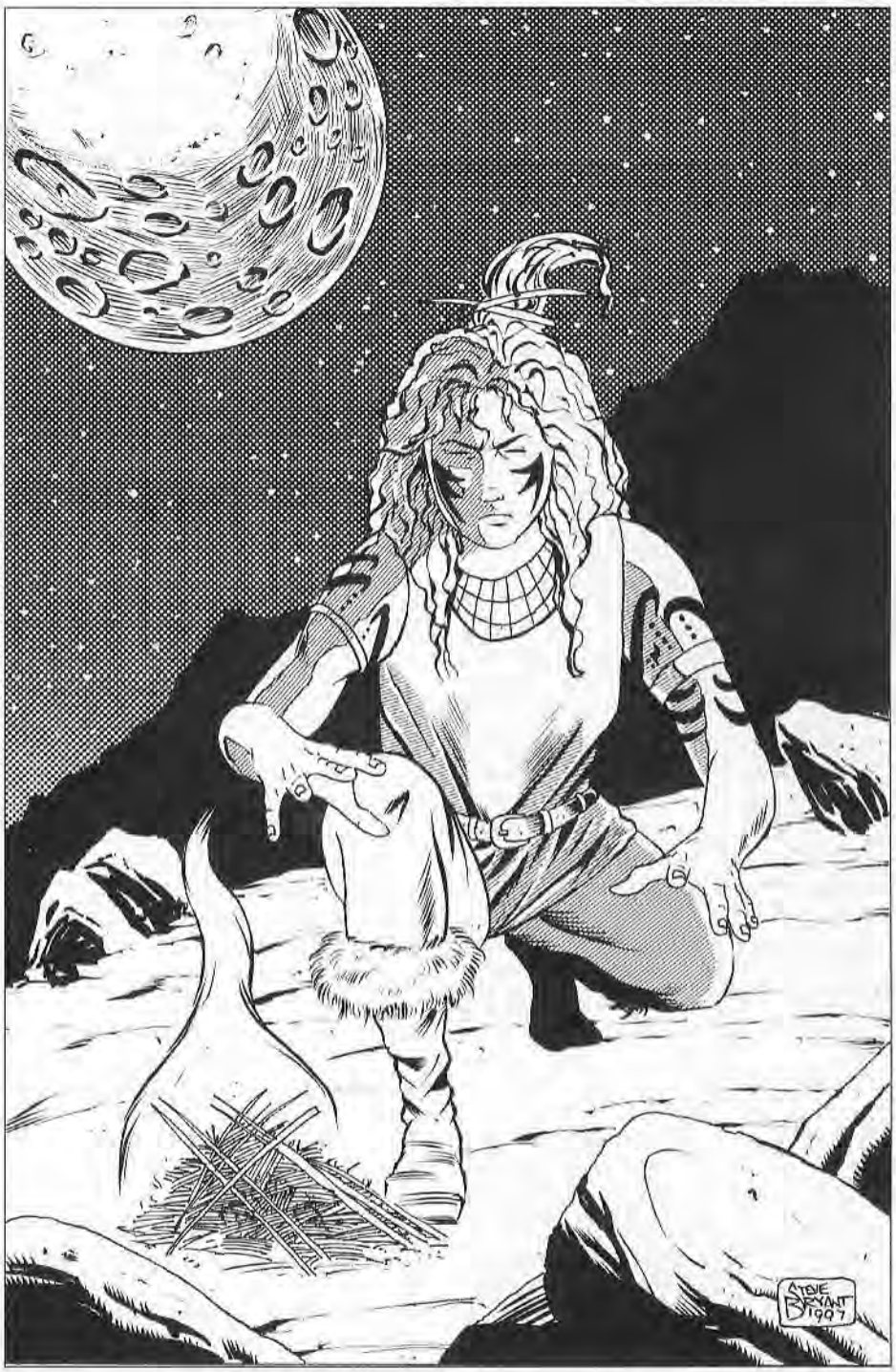
In addition, a psionic character without this ability can use only those psionic powers (devotions and sciences) that affect the character himself or inanimate objects. As the character does not possess the ability to touch another living mind, no psionic power that affects another living being can be used by the character.

Without this ability, the "Psionic attack of choice," "Bonus psionic attack," "Bonus psionic defense," and "Psionic defense of choice" abilities detailed here are useless.

**Detect psionics (5/10):** This ability costs five points for psionicists and 10 points for wild talents. The character can detect psionics in use and/or creatures actively using psionic abilities within 90' and in line-of-sight when the character spends a full round concentrating.

For example, a psionic PC using this ability could not detect an unconscious intellect devourer but could detect a githyanki using a psionic power or engaging in psionic combat that was within range and visible.

**Decreased PSP Costs (5/10):** The psionicist's mind is very efficient, allowing the PC to use PSPs more economically. For five points, the cost to use or maintain all psionic devotions in the PC's primary discipline is decreased by one. For 10 points, this decrease also extends to all sciences in the psionicist's primary discipline. This ability decreases the PSP cost regardless of success or failure of the power's attempted use, but in no case can the cost for attempting a power be decreased to less than 1 PSP. This ability has no effect on psionic combat.




**Followers (5/10):** For five points, the psionicist becomes a contemplative master at 9th level. At this point, one 1st-level psionicist arrives each month, seeking instruction. Students must be fed and boarded, but serve without pay as long as each receives at least 10 hours of training per week. Any students who do not receive the minimum hours leave the PC and spread the word of the master's apathy, forever ending the stream of students to the master. The maximum number of students attracted is equal to one half the maximum number of henchmen that the PC can have according to the PC's Charisma score (or Charisma/Leadership subability). If the psionicist builds a meditative sanctuary, the number of students attracted equals the full number of henchmen that the PC could attract. Note that, in either

## Psionics-Related Errata from *Skills & Powers*

Collected below are the psionics-related errors that have been corrected with the second printing of the *Skills & Powers* book. Most of the changes are minor, but they should help clear up any confusion.

### First Printing

**Page 146, col. 1, 2, sentence 2:** Change "That mind is now open" to "A mind with 0 PSPs is open."

**Page 146, Table 75:** The second column heading should be "MTHAC0 Bonus." All the bonuses should have minus signs, not plus signs.

**Page 148, column 1, 3:** Cross-index the attack with the defense on Table 76.

**Page 148, Table 76:** Reverse all plus and minus signs.

**Page 155, column 1, 1:** The bonus proficiencies are contact and mental armor.

**Table 76:** Psionic Attacks vs. Psionic Defenses has been causing some confusion too. If you have the first printing of the *Player's Option: Skills & Powers* book, the modifier you obtain from this chart applies to the attacker's mental attack roll, not the MTHAC0 target number. Your PC's MTHAC0 doesn't change, simply apply the modifier from Table 76 to the result of your d20 roll.

### Second Printing

**Page 148, column1, 3:** Delete the last sentence of this paragraph.

The second printing of the book reverses the + and – signs on Table 76 on page 148. This means that the modifier obtained from the table now applies to the attacker's MTHAC0 target number, not the result of the d20 roll. The effect is the same—Mind Thrust is still the best attack against Mind Blank, for example—only the nomenclature is different.

case, these students fulfill the role of henchmen and should be treated as such NPCs.

For 10 points, the psionicist becomes a well-renowned contemplative master and can attract 1st-level psionicists as above regardless of the PC's experience level. All other limits above still apply.

If a character doesn't choose this ability, the PC never attracts psionic followers, although acquiring other henchmen and hirelings remains possible.

**Guarded Mind (5/10):** The character's inner strength grants bonuses to saving throws vs. all spells of the enchantment/charm school and sphere. For five points, a +1 bonus is granted vs. those spells, be they wizardly or clerical; for 10 points, a +2 bonus is applied to saving throws vs. all such spells.

**Hit-Point Bonus (10):** Psionicists with this ability roll eight-sided dice to determine their hit points instead of the normal six-sided dice. They still receive only 2 hp per level for reaching 10th level and each level beyond.

**Penetrating Mind (10):** The psionicist's strong will enables the character to penetrate physical barriers more easily than other psionicists. Two inches of lead or iron, four inches of obsidian, or two feet of rock is required to block the psionicist's clairsentient and telepathic powers. Note that most powers require line of sight to be used on a target, and this ability does nothing to negate a blocked line of sight. Further, this ability has no effect on psionic combat and does not grant immunity to magical or psychic barriers that may block psionic powers.

**Psionic Attack of Choice (10):** The psionicist devotes extra time to or possesses superior natural ability with one of the five psionic attacks. The psionicist gains a +1 bonus to mental attack and damage rolls when using that psionic attack. The psionicist's player chooses the particular attack. Note that this ability is useless without the "Contact" ability above.

**Psionic Defense of Choice (10):** The psionicist has exceptional talent with or has developed a stronger version of one of the five psionic defenses. This ability grants the psionicist a +2 bonus to the PC's MAC when using that defense, which is chosen by the player. Note that without the "Contact" ability above, this ability is worthless.

**PSP Bonus (10/15):** Instead of rolling six- sided dice to determine PSPs, the 10-point ability allows the character to roll eight-sided dice. The 15-point ability notes a truly potent psionic mind and the player rolls 10-sided dice to determine his character's PSPs rather than the normal six-sided dice.

**Range Boost (10):** The ranges of all powers in the psionicist's primary discipline are increased by 25%. All powers with ranges of 0, self, or touch are unaffected by this ability. This ability has no effect on psionic combat.

**Unarmed Combat Specialization (5):** This ability is available only to those psionicists who choose to take neither of the "Weapon use" abilities detailed below. These psionicists may specialize in one of the unarmed combat methods: punching (pummeling in the *Player's Option: Combat & Tactics* book), wrestling, or martial arts. This specialization grants a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls when the psionicist makes an appropriate unarmed attack.

Note that psionicists also must purchase proficiency in the unarmed combat style normally to specialize (see "Proficiencies" below). This five-point ability does not grant the PC a cheap specialization, but only allows the player to spend the CPs on a specialization that would not normally be allowed to the psionicist PC.

**Warrior Constitution Bonus (10):** The psionicist gains bonus hit points from high Constitution scores (or the Constitution/Fitness subability) as if the character were a warrior. For example, a psionicist with a 18 Constitution (or Constitution/Fitness) would receive +4 hp per level, rather than +2 hp.

**Weapon Use (5/10):** For five points, the psionicist is eligible to use only the following weapons: hand crossbow, dagger, dart, dirk, knife, scourge, sickle, and short sword. For 10 points, the psionicist can use the above plus the following: short bow, club, light crossbow, hand/throwing axe, javelin, quarterstaff, sling, spear, and war club. Note that this ability grants no proficiency with these weapons; it merely determines the "pool" of weapons from which the character may choose weapon proficiencies.

If the character does not take this ability at all, the psionicist can use no weapons at all with proficiency, relying solely on his body and mind for protection. (See the "Unarmed combat specialization" ability above for an option regarding this.)

Players are allowed to carry over no more than five CPs from this stage of character creation to other parts of the process.

### Psionics & Subabilities

If your campaign uses the subabilities from *Player's Option: Skills & Powers*, Constitution/Fitness, Intelligence/ Reason, and Wisdom/Intuition determine a psionicist's initial PSP allotment. Wild-talent checks use the same subabilities to determine the probability of psionic powers.

Wisdom/Willpower determines a character's base MAC, and Intelligence/Reason determines the PC's MAC modifier.

### Wild Talents

A psionic wild talent can be purchased by any PC (with DM approval) for 15 Character Points. The character need not then roll a wild-talent check but must roll on the chart on *S&P*/156 to determine which wild talent he or she gains. If this rule is used in your campaign, it's suggested that any PC whose players wishes the character to have a wild talent meet the Ability Requirements of a psionicist: Constitution 11, Intelligence 12, and Wisdom 15. This guideline prevents wild talents from becoming too common in a campaign. Of course, such PCs remain merely wild talents, not psionicists.

A Character Point also may be used to reroll a normal wild-talent check that fails. As noted above, wild-talents can never possess more than three psionic attacks and three psionic defenses.

From the list of Class abilities above, wild-talents are able to purchase only the following: Contact, detect psionics, and guarded mind. These abilities can be purchased at any time when the wild-talent PC has the requisite number of Character Points available. In all other ways, wild-talent PCs follow the normal *Skills & Powers* character-generation rules.

### Kits & Social Ranks

If your campaign uses the social ranks and/or the PC kits from the *Skills & Powers* book, the following information applies to psionic characters.

Few psionicists develop from a social rank below Upper Middle Class, as such individuals seldom have sufficient time or opportunity to practice the intricate mental exercises required to release psionic potential as they are too busy working to make a good life for themselves or simply striving to stay alive and put food onto the table.

Similarly, some kits are more suitable for psionic characters than others although none are barred to psionic characters. This list includes the most likely kits for psionicist PCs: diplomat, merchant, mystic, noble, scholar, and spy. There also exists the possibility of creating psionicist kits for particular campaigns.

Wild-talent PCs can come from any social rank and any kit as befits their random nature, race, and class.

### Proficiencies

Newly created psionicists receive 8 Character Points for nonweapon proficiencies and 6 CPs for weapon proficiencies, and as a nonwarrior, must pay 3 CPs per weapon proficiency. Note that the contact proficiency is, in this character-generation system, a class ability and cannot be purchased with nonweapon-proficiency Character Points (unless the DM rules otherwise). In any case, the cost for the contact is as above.

Treat a psionicist as a member of the "rogue and priest" group regarding weapon proficiencies as defined on *S&P*/113. A psionicist cannot normally take any weapon or fighting-style specializations as the extensive training for such would detract from the PC's complex meditations. Psionicists can specialize only in one unarmed combat style and only if they never take proficiency

## Table 5: Additional *Skills & Powers* Proficiencies

**Generalist Group**

| Proficiency | Cost | Base Score |
|---|---|---|
| Mental Armor | 3/5* | N/A |

**Psionicist Group**

| Proficiency | Cost | Base Score |
|---|---|---|
| Gem Cutting | 4 | 7 |
| Harness Subconscious | 3 | 6 |
| Meditative Focus | 3 | 8 |
| Musical Instrument | 2 | 7 |
| Reading/Writing | 2 | 8 |
| Rejuvenation | 3 | 7 |
| Religion | 2 | 7 |

* The cost to the left of the slash is the cost for psionic characters (both wild talents and psionicists) and the cost to the right of the slash is the cost for all nonpsionic characters.

in any weapon (see "Unarmed combat specialization" above).

The costs and base scores for the other nonweapon proficiencies from the *Skills & Powers* psionics section appear in **Table 5.** All proficiency rules from the *Skills & Powers* book still apply.

Players may carry over up to five CPs from this portion of the character-generation process for other purposes.

### Traits & Disadvantages

Tucked away within the Nonweapon Proficiencies chapter of the *Skills & Powers* book are two new features to the AD&D game: traits and disadvantages. These personality quirks help flesh out a character, and they can certainly do so for a psionic PC. Below are lists of both traits and disadvantages that are particularly well suited for psionic characters. All normal rules regarding traits and disadvantages still apply.

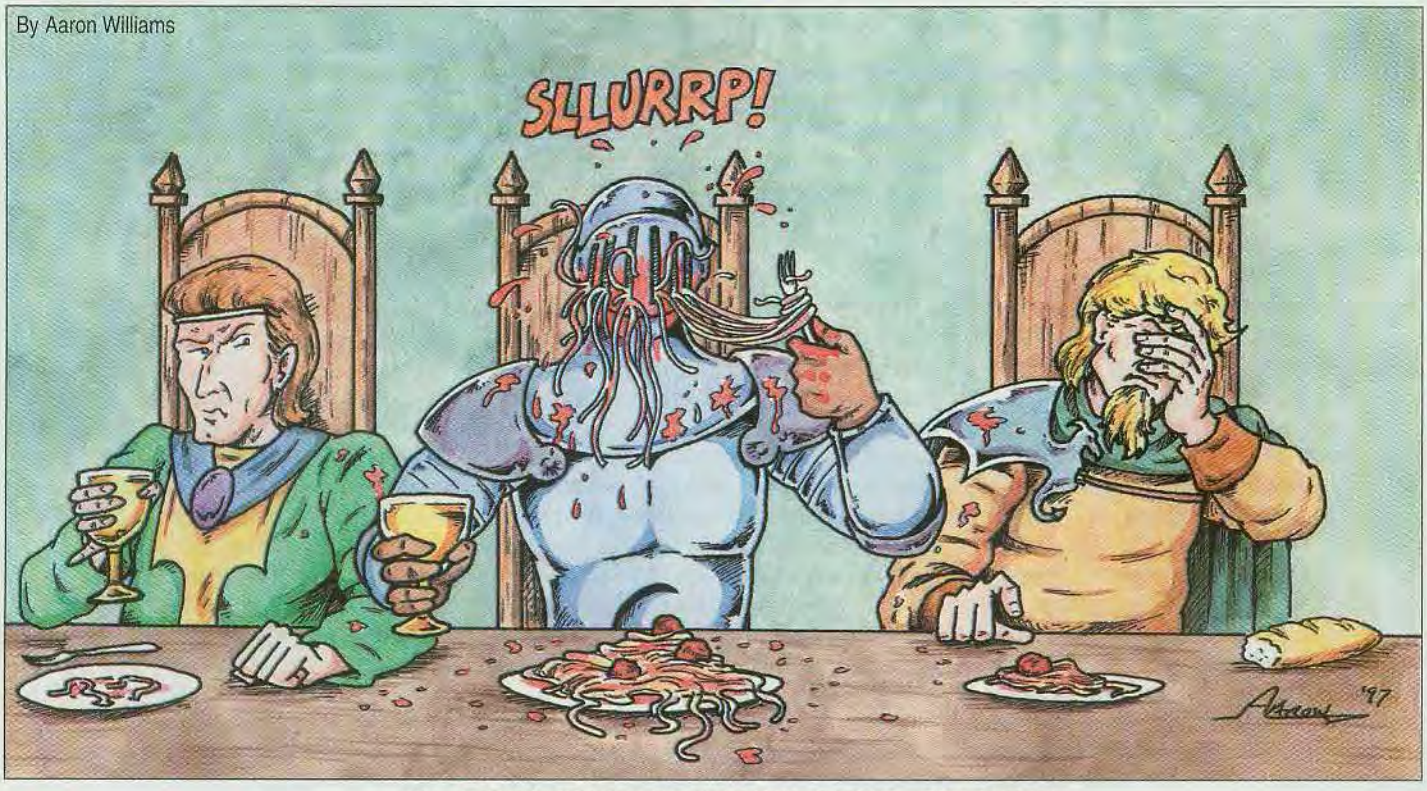
**Traits:** Alertness, animal empathy, artistic ability, empathy, light sleeper, lucky, obscure knowledge (psionic powers are very obscure on many worlds, such as Toril, the home of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting), and precise memory.

**Disadvantages:** Bruise easily, compulsive honesty, deep sleeper, fanaticism, phobias (one who engages in mental combat regularly might suffer lasting effects of lost battles in this way), powerful enemy, tongue-tied, and unlucky.

Your psionic PC should now be ready to join her compatriots in the neverending battle against evil, greed, and cruelty.

*Dale Donovan & Bill Slavicsek would like to thank Kevin Melka and all who participated in the psionics seminar at the 1996 GEN CON® Game Fair for their input on this article.*

By Aaron Williams

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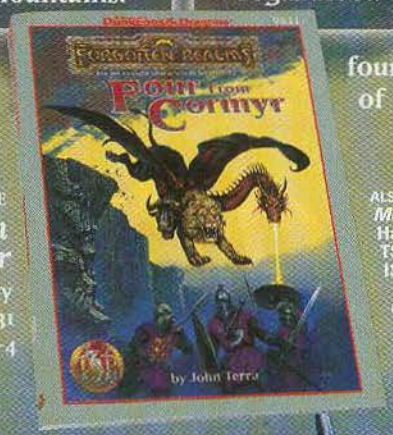


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# The Dragon's Bestiary

# Arctic Monsters

by Belinda G. Ashley

**illustrated by C.H. Burnett**

Bitter wind, frostbite, wet snow clinging like lead weights to your boots, and difficult terrain. The only thing you and your friends want now is to find a sheltered spot to rest, build a fire, and get a hot kettle boiling for some tea. But there's no rest for the weary. Not when creatures, like those that follow, prowl the wilderness, searching for an easy snack.

Ultimately, this edge of fear and near exhaustion in the PCs is exactly what a crafty DM wants to maintain in an arctic campaign. The rugged terrain and freezing temperatures of the arctic are a natural challenge to the best outfitted PC party. The next step for a DM is to introduce monsters that not only work logically in their habitat, but set new heights of apprehension for the PCs as well. However, the problem many arctic adventures suffer is that there are only a handful of monsters that dwell in cold climates. Players who have been around the AD&D game long enough will be familiar with these few monsters. And even with the best of role-playing, seasoned gamers often impart their knowledge on their (supposedly) unknowing PCs. So what's a DM to do? Give the players new monsters to battle. But not just any monsters. Give them beasts that will leave their PCs wishing they had spent their last copper on a tour to the tropics.

When working with new monsters, a DM should be aware of the monsters' weaknesses and strengths and how these relate to a party. A group of well-organized PCs that fight as a team will be thoroughly weakened by crystal skeletons. Groups that stress the importance of the individual can easily fall prey to snow spiders and growlers. And few but elves and half-elves have any immunity to the ice lizard's attack. The key to using these creatures in play lies in their ability to surprise and baffle the players. If the players are sweating about their predicament, the DM can be assured that the PCs are sweating too. The four creatures that follow share similar habitats and unusual tactics in combat. By using these tactics wisely, a DM can wreak havoc on the most organized group of PCs.

# Snow Spiders

| | |
|---|---|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Any subarctic |
| FREQUENCY: | Rare |
| ORGANIZATION: | Pack |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE: | Any except midday |
| DIET: | Carnivore |
| INTELLIGENCE: | Low (5–7) |
| TREASURE: | O, Q |
| ALIGNMENT: | Neutral |
| NO. APPEARING: | 5–15 |
| ARMOR CLASS: | 6 (Queen, 4) |
| MOVEMENT: | 15, swim 12 (Queen, 12, swim 8) |
| HIT DICE: | 4+3 (Queen, 6+1) |
| THACO: | 15 |
| NO. OF ATTACKS: | 1 |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK: | 1–3 and acid |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS: | Impaling |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Surprise and camouflage |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | 35% (Queen, 50%) |
| SIZE: | S (2½' tall) |
| MORALE: | Elite–14 (Queen, Fanatic–18) |
| XP VALUE: | 975 (Queen, 1,400) |

Snow spiders look like muscular, furry, eight-legged arachnids, but they are warm-blooded mammals who stalk the forests and tundra of the north. Their fur is white on the head and back, and striped pale grey or brown along the legs, making the perfect camouflage in snowy regions. Two almond-shaped pale blue or amber eyes, a mouth of razor sharp teeth, and a large upright head with a flexible neck like that of an owl distinguish them further from true spiders. Snow spiders' furry feet have three clawed toes facing forward and one back. Webbing between the toes helps them cross snow drifts, and they are excellent swimmers.

**Combat:** Snow spiders are cunning predators, hunting in packs of 5–15. The hours just before dawn and right after sunset are their preferred times to hunt. Snow spiders may choose between two different attacks, biting and impaling. While their bite causes only 1–3 hp damage, their acidic saliva causes an additional 1–6 hp corrosive damage. A victim who successfully saves vs. poison suffers half damage. However, the snow spider's favorite attack is impaling. Sheathed within the heel of each foot is a 3'-long spike of bone. When prey is in range, the spider leaps forward, unsheathes its spikes, and strikes the victim feet-first, delivering 3d8 hp damage. Snow spiders can leap 10' vertically or 15' horizontally. The spikes are also used for climbing trees or rocky hillsides, and for securing their footing over ice.

A hunting pack works as a team, scouting ahead, setting ambushes, and attacking in concert. Snow spiders can make a deep resonant chirring sound as a scare tactic, scattering members of a flock or herd into the rest of the waiting pack. When in their terrain and season, they have an 85% chance of going unseen. Their sense of smell and hearing is average, but they have keen eyesight and receive a +1 bonus to their surprise roll.

Snow spiders' fur is flammable, and the creatures suffer double damage against normal fires. They still retain their magic resistance bonus against magical fires, plus any saving throws allowed. Non-magical cold does not affect them.

**Habitat/Society:** Snow spiders live in cold regions where snow is on the ground for most of the year. They make their homes in well-hidden burrow dens dug deep into rocky hillsides. During the summer months, they go into a state of semi-hibernation, coming out a few times during the season at night. Temperatures over 50° F make snow spiders sluggish, raising their AC to 8 and slowing their movement rate to 8. In the colder months, the pack roams for days looking for prey.

Packs consist only of males; the only female is the queen. She is larger and slower than the males, has thicker skin, and lacks the camouflage markings on the legs. She digs the den for the pack while they bring her food. The queen never leaves the vicinity of the den and spends her life guarding and enlarging the den and rearing the young. Twice a year, the queen gives birth to one or two kits. Males are raised within the den for one year, whereupon they join the pack. Female kits are usually taken from the den into the wilderness to die. There are two exceptions. When a pack reaches approximately 20 members, the queen raises the next female born. After one year, the female young and several younger males strike out to start a pack of their own. The other exception is when the queen reaches old age. When the queen feels her time waning, she produces a single female kit. After the kit matures, the young female kills the queen and eat her, thus becoming the new queen. The old queen does not fight her offspring, and the males do not partake in the feast. This is not the only instance of cannibalism within the pack. When food is very scarce, the pack turns on the weakest male, killing and eating him.

Snow spiders communicate with a clicking, chirring sound as well as a simple sign language used during hunting. Because of physical limitations, they cannot speak another language but can be taught to understand one.

All treasure found in the lair is incidental, coming from victims that have been dragged to the lair for consumption.

**Ecology:** Locals sometimes collect the saliva of a spider to use as an acid. However, they are difficult to capture and more difficult to keep. Snow spiders do not eat anything that they did not kill. A single snow spider does not survive well in captivity, as it relies heavily on the social interaction of the pack. The captive spider curls up in a corner, refusing to move or take live prey, and eventually starves itself to death.

# Crystal Skeletons

| | |
|---|---|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Any arctic or subarctic region |
| FREQUENCY: | Very rare |
| ORGANIZATION: | Band |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE: | Any |
| DIET: | Nil |
| INTELLIGENCE: | Semi-intelligent (2–4) |
| TREASURE: | Nil |
| ALIGNMENT: | Chaotic evil |
| NO. APPEARING: | 1–8 |
| ARMOR CLASS: | 8 |
| MOVEMENT: | 12 |
| HIT DICE: | 1 |
| THAC0: | 18 |
| NO. OF ATTACKS: | 2 |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK: | 1–4 |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS: | See below |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | See below |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil |
| SIZE: | M (5'–7') |
| MORALE: | Special |
| XP VALUE: | 175 |

Crystal skeletons are human or demi-human skeletons that have been transformed by a series of spells into pale blue ice. Little is known about the creation of these fell creatures, though most sages agree that *animate dead,* a specialized *delayed shatter* (see below), and protective magics are involved. It is argued that *create water* and *control temperature 10' radius* are also needed for the creation, suggesting that not only are there dark arts at play, but unholy prayers as well.

Unlike normal skeletons, crystal skeletons are semi-intelligent and have been known to track their victims endlessly, plotting the best routes and ambushes. Crystal skeletons understand the language of their creator as well as the native tongue they spoke when they were alive. They communicate with their creator with nods or shakes of their head and share a telepathic bond with others of their kind. There is no record of crystal skeletons communicating with others, though it is thought possible.

**Combat:** Crystal skeletons do not use weapons. Instead they attack twice per round with their dagger sharp fingers. As with other skeletons, they suffer half damage from edged or piercing weapons and are immune to *sleep, charm, hold, fear,* and any other mind-affecting spells. Blunt weapons inflict normal damage. Holy water causes 2–8 hp damage per vial.

However, crystal skeletons are not created for their fighting abilities but for their destructive powers. Crystal skeletons head unerringly for the most densely occupied area of a group to fight. With so few hit points and poor THAC0, they are easily dispatched. Once destroyed however, they explode into razor-sharp shards of ice. Each explosion covers a 10' radius and inflicts 3d4+2 hp damage. Victims of a blast receive a saving throw vs. paralyzation. If the save is made, only half damage is suffered. Spells or psionics that cause non-living matter to shatter make the skeletons explode with double the force, increasing range to 20' radius and damage to 6d4+2. One round after the blast, the shards vaporize into steam. Shards embedded in flesh at the moment of vaporization cause additional damage. If the previous save was successful, only 1–3 hp damage is taken; if failed, the victim suffers 1–6 hp damage.

Organized and cunning, crystal skeletons realize their greatest threat is their exploding bodies and wait for the best opportunity to damage the largest number of foes, attacking with maddening glee. They are immune to cold-based attacks and are turned by priests as 2-HD creatures. Crystal skeletons fight to the death and never need to check morale.

**Habitat/Society:** Crystal skeletons are only found in cold regions where snow and ice are common. They have no society and exist purely at the whim of their evil creators. Though they are compelled to follow orders of their creator, they are not beyond independent thought. They are not passive undead, waiting motionless in a crypt or graveyard, but a restless guard, stalking an area in frustrated anger. Sages believe that crystal skeletons exist in an agitated state because they are good-aligned souls trapped in an evil union of magics. This would account for their suicidal attacks, as once destroyed, their souls are free to rest in peace once again.

**Ecology:** Because crystal skeletons are undead and unnatural creations, they play no role in ecology or nature.

## New Spell

### Delayed Shatter

This spell is similar to the second-level Wizard *shatter* spell in the *Player's Handbook.* The differences for *delayed shatter* are as follows: it is a third-level spell and has a casting time of 3, the spell can be cast only on a single object, and the duration lasts until the object on which the spell was cast is destroyed. All other statistics are the same as *shatter.* Since this spell cannot be cast on magical items, it is assumed that this is the first spell cast to create a crystal skeleton.

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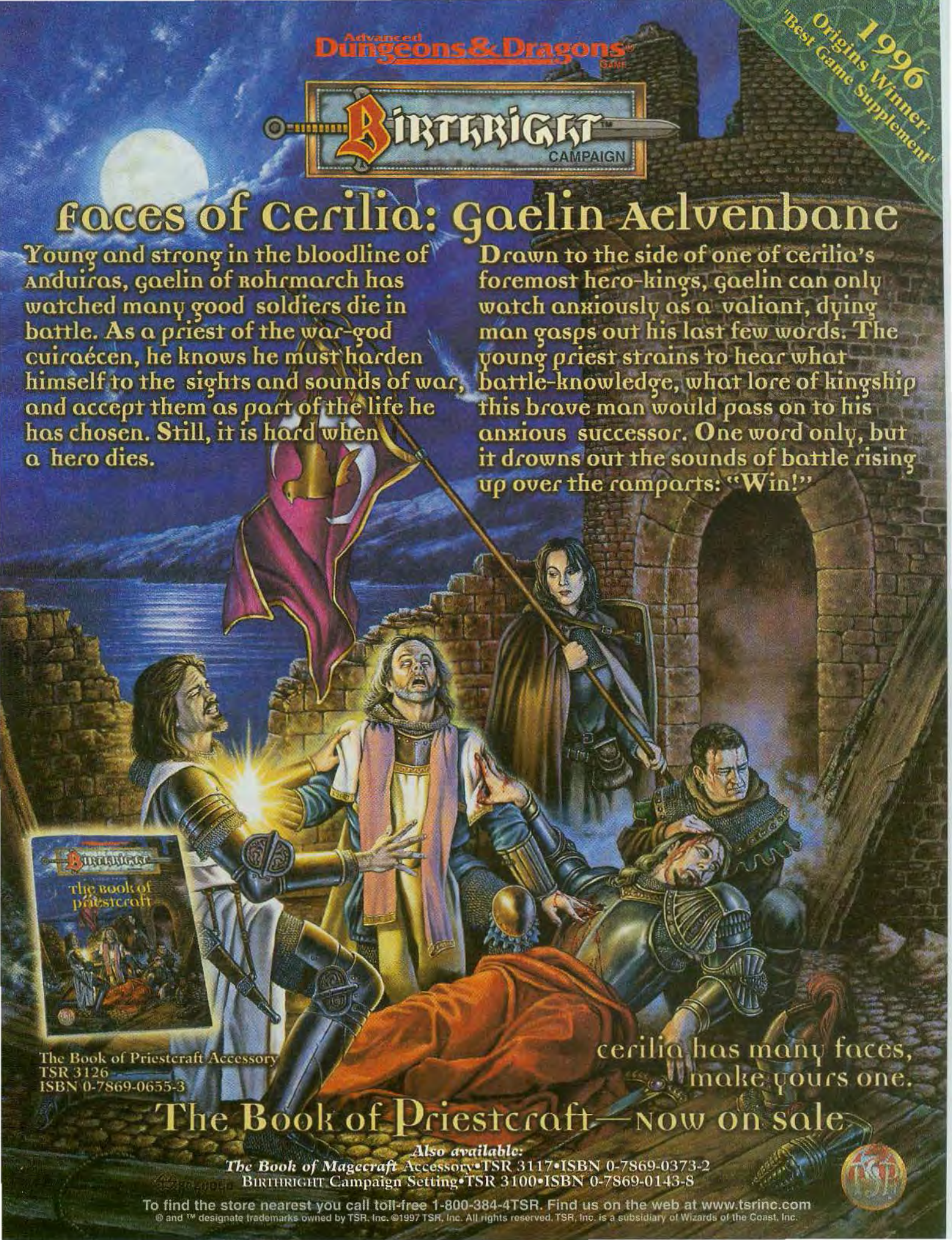


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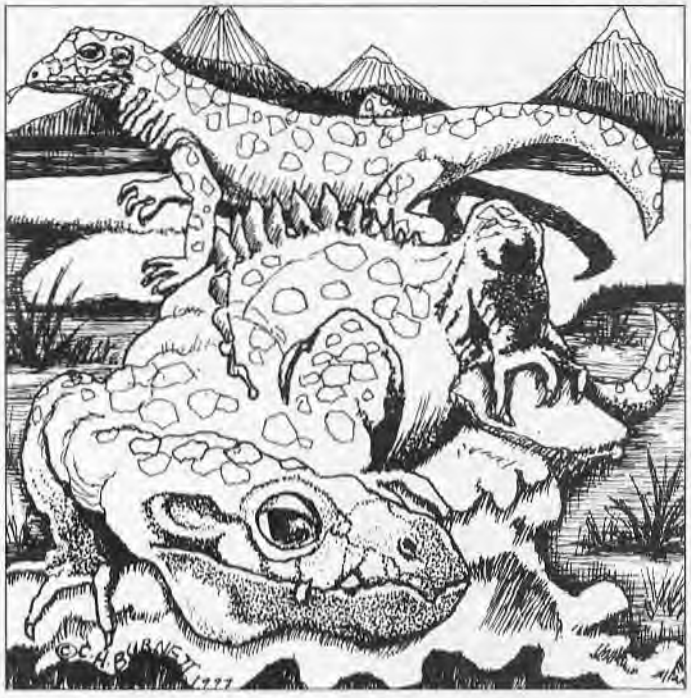
# Tundra Lizards

| | |
|---|---|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Subarctic, arctic |
| FREQUENCY: | Rare |
| ORGANIZATION: | Solitary |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE: | Any |
| DIET: | Omnivorous |
| INTELLIGENCE: | Animal (1) |
| TREASURE: | Nil |
| ALIGNMENT: | Neutral |
| NO. APPEARING: | 1 |
| ARMOR CLASS: | 4 |
| MOVEMENT: | 15 |
| HIT DICE: | 3 |
| THAC0: | 14 |
| NO. OF ATTACKS: | 3 |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK: | 1–3/1–3/1–6 |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS: | See below |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Camouflage |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil |
| SIZE: | S (3'–4') |
| MORALE: | Unsteady (5–7) |
| XP VALUE: | 420 |




Tundra lizards are warm-blooded creatures that roam the cold regions of the north. To survive the bitter chill, tundra lizards are covered in thick plates of leathery skin and have a special heat-draining ability. During the winter, their skin is white along their backs and legs, and pale green on their stomachs. In areas where the snow melts during the short summers, tundra lizards turn a mottled brown and white. Because of their coloration, they are 95% undetectable by all but the most observant. Rangers and those who are familiar with the tundra lizard (i.e., those living in the arctic or subarctic climates) have 20% bonus to detect.

Tundra lizards have long snouts to burrow into mouse and rabbit warrens, and long claws to rip open dens. Despite their dense skin, they are quick and agile. They have a keen sense of smell similar to that of dogs, and almond-shaped silver eyes with 60' infravision. Their tails are short, but their limbs are long and muscular. Males have a ridge of small spikes along the center of their backs and are usually larger than females.

Though meat is their preferred meal, tundra lizards eat almost anything, even refuse left by people or carcasses from another's kill. They will not, however, eat rotting or poisoned meat.

**Combat:** Tundra lizards drain heat from other warm-blooded mammals to survive in the harsh terrain of the north, storing the heat as energy. Excellent stalkers, tundra lizards track their prey across the snow-covered valleys and mountains until an opportunity arises to use their special ability. tundra lizards emit a pleasant smell similar to lavender from their pores, causing *sleep* to all air-breathing creatures within a 10' radius. They can produce this affect four times per day. Target creatures receive a –2 to their saves. When a tundra lizard collects warmth from a host body, it drains 1 point of Constitution and 1d3 hp. It must touch the victim to absorb the heat. This collection takes two rounds, during which time the tundra lizard does not move. If forced to move within this time period, it does so at half the movement rate. Tundra lizards must receive a minimum of 4 Constitution points and 4 hp per day to sustain their metabolisms, sometimes draining all they need from one victim. Constitution points lost to tundra lizards are regained at 1 point per week; hit points lost can be regained normally or by any cure spell or potion.

Anything less than the minimum daily drain causes the lizard to weaken, shiver, and move sluggishly. After three days without draining, they freeze and die. This harsh departure from the world has earned them their name.

Tundra lizards do not attack creatures larger than themselves unless cornered, preferring to trip attackers and run away. A trip is a special attack, rolled as a called shot against base AC 10, modified for Dexterity and magic. If tripped, a creature must spend one round regaining its footing. If no other course than fighting presents itself, tundra lizards attack fiercely with long claws and sharp teeth.

**Habitat/Society:** Tundra lizards are territorial and roam over vast quantities of land during their daily travels. They are active through spring, summer and fall but go into semi-hibernation during winter. Daytime is their preferred time to hunt, though they have been known to attack at night as well. Tundra lizards are loners except when mating or rearing their young. They mate once a year during the early fall. The female carefully digs a den, concealing the entrance with rocks, and gives birth to 3–4 live young in the spring. After the young are one month old, the father leaves the den while the mother continues to protect and feed her young. The mother never brings a kill to the den. Instead she regurgitates the food for the youngsters. The juveniles leave the nest after eight months to find their own territory. Tundra lizards live between 10–15 years.

**Ecology:** Tundra lizards are quick to pick off the old and sick, so they are not prone to overfeeding in one area. Few animals will attack a tundra lizard, partially because their tough hides are difficult to penetrate and partially because when eaten, the sacs which hold the sleep poison burst, putting the predator into a deep slumber. In the harsh world of the north, an unguarded sleeping creature is an easy meal.

Their hides are good for making small shields, pauldrons, and breastplates but are too hard for other apparel. Tundra lizards are also killed for their sleep sacs. Alchemists use these sacs to create very potent sleep potions.

Tundra lizards are sometimes given as "gifts" to an unwary opponent as a means to weaken or even kill the opponent without anyone the wiser.

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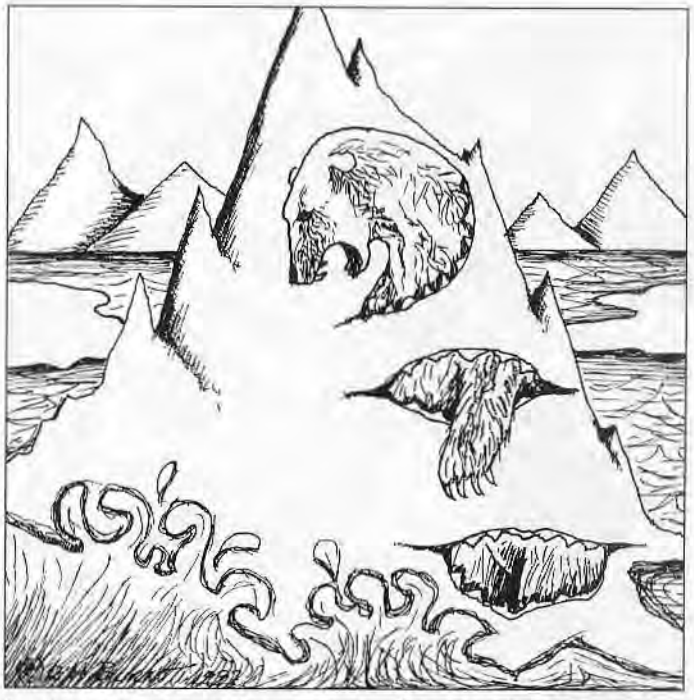
# Growlers

| | |
|---|---|
| CLIMATE/TERRAIN: | Arctic, aquatic |
| FREQUENCY: | Very rare |
| ORGANIZATION: | Solitary |
| ACTIVITY CYCLE: | Any |
| DIET: | Carnivore |
| INTELLIGENCE: | Average (8–10) |
| TREASURE: | O, R, V |
| ALIGNMENT: | Neutral evil |
| NO. APPEARING: | 1 |
| ARMOR CLASS: | 2 (0) |
| MOVEMENT: | Swim 12 |
| HIT DICE: | 11+3 |
| THAC0: | 10 |
| NO. OF ATTACKS: | See below |
| DAMAGE/ATTACK: | Special, see below |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS: | Sonic attack, drowning |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Nil |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil |
| SIZE: | G (40'–50' in diameter) |
| MORALE: | Steady (11–12) |
| XP VALUE: | 7,000 |



Growlers are amorphous beings whose lives are spent at sea. Looking like miniature icebergs, they are often found floating among normal ice formations near shore. Though most of its massive body is sponge-like and rubbery, a growler has a hard, flat, movable plate of cartilage along its back; this plate is AC 0. Around the edges of the plate are rows of heat sensory organs. Growlers have no eyes but use these sensors to detect small amounts of heat and can locate prey out to 100 feet.

Growlers can transform from a tall, jagged iceberg to a flat, wide ice floe in one turn. Morphing in this manner helps the growler maneuver. By increasing its vertical dimensions above water, it creates a "sail" to catch the wind. Growlers also move by water propulsion. Water is inhaled through a special valve and exhaled through mini "jets" that line the bottom of the growler. This system doubles as a growler's respiratory system, passing water over its gills. Growlers cannot breathe air.

Because of their understanding of tides and wind, growlers are superior sailors with the equivalent of seamanship and navigation proficiencies at a score of 18 each, making the chance of any ship out-maneuvering them quite slender. Growlers do not sleep and are highly aware of their surroundings, so they can be surprised only on a roll of a natural 1.

Growlers gain their name from the low rumbling noise they make when attacking and feeding. They communicate by a limited form of telepathy. Though growlers have no monetary need nor care for treasure, anything deemed valuable is collected and used as bait to lure unsuspecting victims to their death.

**Combat:** Growlers are aggressive carnivores, relying on their intelligence, cunning, and telepathic abilities to capture prey. Rotting carcasses or other "treasures" are left on their shell-like backs to attract other carnivores such as bears or wolves. Once a creature steps onto the growler, it attacks. By moving air quickly through its body, via air ducts along its surface, a growler makes an ear-shattering sonic attack. Any creature within a 20' radius must make a save vs. death or be stunned for one round and become deaf for 1d4 rounds. A victim with a successful save avoids the stun but is still deafened for 1d4 rounds. Growlers can attack with a sound burst every other round. Once the victim is stunned, the growler folds its body across the victim, holding it firm against the shell, and submerges just far enough beneath the water to drown the creature. (See the *PHB* for rules on "Holding Your Breath.") The carcass is then slowly pulled through the exterior skin into the body to be devoured at leisure. A creature may make a Strength check to attempt to pull free of a growler's hold. Growlers have a Strength score of 18. When attempting to break free, both the victim and the growler make ability checks; the highest successful roll wins. Growlers do not absorb living prey. Digestion of medium to large prey takes 1d4 days, after which time a body can not be *resurrected*. Metal and gemstones are not consumed.

Blunt weapons cause only half damage to growlers. Magic bonuses to blunt weapons still cause damage. Other weapons inflict normal damage.

**Habitat/Society:** Growlers live, reproduce, and die in the arctic seas. They stay close to land, where they feed on bears, seals, wolves, and other sea-reliant creatures. Their preferred prey though, are intelligent beings. Frost giants, humans, and demi-humans are all favorites because growlers like the planning needed to capture intelligent creatures. Growlers have been known to torture victims—stunning them, swimming from shore, releasing them, only to stun them again. Growlers are a menace to small boats as well, capsizing craft smaller than themselves. Those who do not freeze immediately in the icy waters are stunned and devoured. Growlers must devour approximately 800 pounds of meat per week.

Growlers do not mate and are genderless. Once a year, during the winter solstice, growlers split in half, creating two identical creatures (size H, 20') of 5 HD, THAC0 15. All other attributes are the same. They live approximately 30–40 years.

**Ecology:** Despite their mean disposition, growlers support a number of creatures and plants along their submerged surfaces. Cold water algae and krill are just two of the many small variety of marine life that makes a growler its homebase. A growler will work with other intelligent evil beings provided food is its reward. Such relationships do not last long, for growlers believe themselves too intelligent to slave for another and eventually try to consume their partner.

# THERE'S A VAST DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FANTASY AND FAIRY TALES....

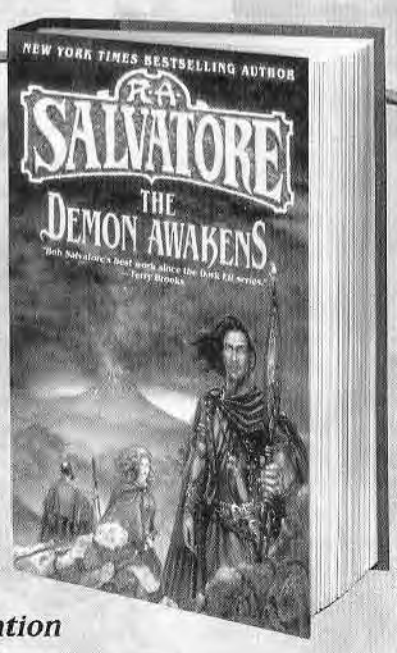
## "The demon dactyl came awake.

"The tangible, corporeal body felt good to the wandering spirit. The dactyl could feel its blood, hot blood, coursing through its wings and mighty legs, could feel the twitching of its mighty muscles. The creature flexed and stretched, extended its wings to their full glory, reached and clawed at the air with its humanlike arms. The demon extended its fingernails, transformed them into hooked claws, and grew its teeth—two pointed canines extending down over its bottom lip. Every part of the demon was a weapon, devastating and deadly.

"And undeniably powerful though this monster appeared, this demon's real strength lay in its mind and its purpose, the tempter of souls, the twister of hearts, the maker of lies. How long had it been? The creature remembered that long-ago time now, savored the thoughts of the streaming blood as army after army had joined in delicious, desperate battle.

"Its thoughts turned from its enemies to those it would summon as minions. The wicked goblins certainly, so full of anger and greed, so delighting in murder and war. The fomorian giants of the mountains... And the powries, yes, the powries, the cunning, warlike dwarves who hated the humans above all others. A line of drool hung low from the dactyl's mouth as it considered its former and future allies, its army of woe. The dactyl threw back its head and opened wide its mouth, screeching for the sheer joy of the return, for the thoughts of the chaos it would bring again to the quiet human kingdoms of Corona."

## THIS IS NO "ONCE UPON A TIME."

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# Talk of the Town

by Lloyd Brown

**illustrated by Susan Van Camp**

Adventurers don't spend all of their time slaying dragons and recovering priceless jewels, nor are they the only ones in the campaign world to whom interesting things happen. Most campaigns center on the working people who interact directly with the PCs—the smiths, innkeepers, merchants, and warehouse guards that PCs speak with or buy from daily. There are also the farmers who feed them, the ranchers who raise and train the horses the characters buy, the functionaries who crank the gears of the government. Ordinary events may be very important in the lives of these people: much more important than rumors about a lost treasure these people will never be able to chase after.

The best use of these daily events is to allow some interaction in the daily life of the town in a situation that isn't related to a larger adventure. These events can help develop a campaign by introducing an NPC or two or bringing to the players' attention some other aspect of the DM's world. These are not crucial plot drivers, just a means to add life and character to city adventuring. The DM can also use an event or two to help bring character to a new town or city the PCs are passing through (see "Dot to Dot" in *Dragon*® *Magazine* #226 for other ideas about how to flesh out a briefly-met village).

Another method is to have the action happen when the PCs are off-stage. The events may not directly involve the PCs, but they can certainly be a source for rumors and speculation about town. When the PC rogue is slumming, checking for rumors about the dwarven king's lost crown, he'll hear stories about the strange visitors who are staying upstairs at the inn, or the search for Farmer Token's lost little boy. These things are much more in the front of people's minds than stories their parents told them about any lost treasure when they were kids.

By using these mundane events, the DM reminds the players that their characters are not the source of all progress in the game world, and that events happen which have nothing at all to do with them. This sort of verisimilitude is what makes the campaign come alive in the players' minds.

These events can serve other purposes as well. They may be used to introduce an NPC who serves as the hook for a "real" adventure later on. One of the natural events may be the result of the tampering with nature of a wizard, or priest. Maybe the frequent storms in the area are conjured by a wizard or priest on the edge of a full-scale war with the druids, for example. When used concurrently with a city or town adventure, these events provide red herrings, as the players assume that the DM wouldn't mention anything unusual about the town unless it was directly related to the story. If this technique is used often enough, the players will begin to think carefully about what decisions they make.

This chart is designed to help DMs who wish to add a quick encounter to an adventure already in play, or to provide some detail to an otherwise run-of-the-mill town on the roadside. For an existing, permanent part of the campaign, the DM should choose an event that does not conflict with his future plans for the town and its people. The DM should only roll if he is creating a new locale or wishes to randomly change the center of his campaign (rarely advisable).

This chart was inspired by a similar description of events in the *Oriental Adventures* rules, which describes events on a daily, monthly, and yearly scale. *Oriental Adventures* also mentions other events that have more bearing in an Oriental society. DMs may wish to read the section on events in that book for more inspiration.

## Event Descriptions

**Protector Leaves:** A benefactor of the town leaves or is killed. This protector can be a great variety of things: a storm giant, a band of rangers, a couatl, a druid, or a good dragon. Mundane protectors might include nobility, a band of knights, or the sheriff. This departure is not necessarily a permanent move. The protector could be torn away pursuing enemies of the town. The storm giant might be visiting relatives on a nearby mountain. The druids might be convening to discuss matters important to the whole realm. A temporary loss might make people nervous, but with a little luck the town survives without its protector. The protector's absence certainly demands a call for some action on the part of the PCs.

**Drowning:** Even in the most desolate of places, people drown either from falling down steep wells, being caught in a strong current, or possibly just swimming out too far. Sometimes the person's body has not been found, and a shoreline vigil has been assembled. In this event, PCs might look for the person, be on site to hear screams for help, or meet an interesting NPC related to the victim somehow.

**Collapse:** Occasionally, a building of some sort suffers damage, shows cracks, or just collapses. This structure might be a bridge, a dam, a public building, or a famous residence. For this minor event, there should be no loss of life, but it should be a visual spectacle, possibly occurring in the middle of day where everyone can see it, or emitting a horrible groaning and creaking for days before stress causes a sudden thunderclap crack running down the side. The town worries about whether the structure will hold up, immediate repairs or temporary accommodations are made, and emergency meetings are held. The collapse might have been an act of sabotage, either from another nation of the same race, a humanoid tribe, or another, unknown enemy. PCs might be asked to check out this possibility, even if it really was a natural occurrence involving age or poor construction.

**Undead Monster.** This incident is a little more serious than the threat of humanoids or the occasional giant eagle, because undead often have many immunities, so commonly armed townsfolk might be ineffective, regardless of courage. The monster might be an animated dead body, a free-willed minor undead such as a ghoul, or something more powerful. The undead is most likely to arise in the city cemetery, but could also appear at the site of a battle, accident, or crime. It might also be a false rumor, a fraud of a cunning rogue, a person buried alive, or a friendly ghost who rises to guard the town against other hazards. PCs might be asked to investigate or wish to check up on it themselves. It might even be a revenant, searching for a PC!

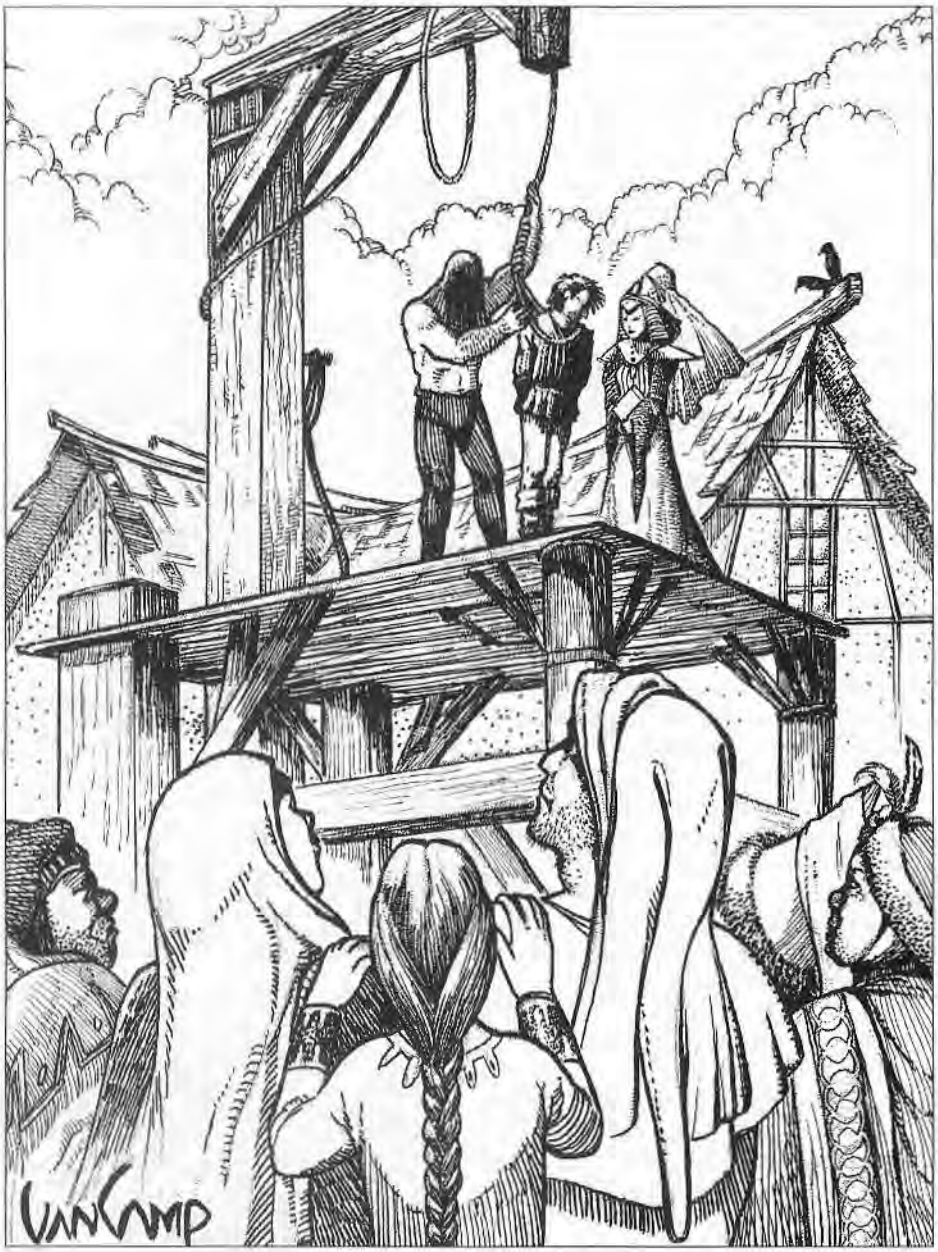
**Humanoid Skirmishes:** Outlying farms or ranches have been attacked by one of the neighboring tribes of humanoids. A small band of humanoids might have developed a taste for pork and decided that the humans can spare one or two animals. In this case, the humans usually have the morale advantage and the advantage of cover and can usually drive off the invaders after inflicting some light casualties. The PCs might be asked to make a retaliatory strike to dissuade the humanoids from repeating the event. They might also be asked to return a valuable item that was carried off.

**Tribute Due:** A group of bandits, a dragon, or a giant might demand tribute to keep them from destroying the town. The tribute varies in amount according to the size of the town and the power of the oppressor. It might include livestock and foodstuffs, dry goods, coins, and art objects. It could be a small chest or a large train of wagons that must have to be delivered outside of the city or town to a predetermined location. The tribute is due on a regular date most often, but chaotic oppressors will appear or send emissaries irregularly to demand payment. The tribute might also be a token payment given to a good guardian such as a storm giant, a lammasu, or a couatl for protection from monsters. The payments these monsters demand are much lighter than tribute and often consist of things more useful for survival than piles of gold or silver. If the PCs are low in level, they might find themselves guarding the tribute from bandits. They might be asked to contribute money of their own. Stronger groups might be hired to kill or drive off the oppressor if the town has confidence in the PCs' ability to succeed.

**Death:** Unfortunately, life has other facets as well. The PCs might be affected by a death outside of the party. Whether kind innkeeper or great nobility, death cannot be avoided forever. The PCs might lose an ally, a neighbor, or a friend. Or, a complete stranger might pass away. This event assumes that natural causes are the occasion (foul play is mentioned elsewhere). Disease and death, although curable in a fantasy world, are sometimes not to be overcome, especially for the poor and nonmagical tinkers, stevedores, and smiths that make up most of the world. After death, people are often buried. Cultures differ, and the deceased might be cremated, entombed, set out to sea in his own boat, or something entirely different

**Table 1: Random Events**

| Roll (5d10) | Event |
|---|---|
| 5 | Protector Leaves |
| 6 | Drowning |
| 7 | Collapse |
| 8 | Undead Monster |
| 9 | Humanoid Skirmishes |
| 10 | Tribute Due |
| 11 | Death |
| 12 | Public Execution |
| 13 | Murder Attempt |
| 14 | Kidnapping |
| 15 | Insect Plague |
| 16 | Flooding |
| 17 | Fire |
| 18 | Major Theft |
| 19 | Earthquake |
| 20 | Nearby Village Attacked |
| 21 | Tax Collection |
| 22 | Canal |
| 23 | Public Punishment |
| 24 | Extreme Weather |
| 25 | Press Gang |
| 26 | Moat |
| 27 | Search |
| 28 | Duel |
| 29 | Opening |
| 30 | Races/Games |
| 31 | Marriage |
| 32 | Agricultural Event |
| 33 | Birth |
| 34 | Road |
| 35 | Wall |
| 36 | Faith Magic Casting |
| 37 | Bard |
| 38 | Gladiatorial Games |
| 39 | Local Hero |
| 40 | Pilgrims |
| 41 | Bridge |
| 42 | Wargames |
| 43 | Sage |
| 44 | Holy Man |
| 45 | Holiday |
| 46 | Fair/Carnival/Circus |
| 47 | Ambassador |
| 48 | Garrisoning of Town |
| 49 | Holy Artifact |
| 50 | Enemy Killed |




(like disintegrated in a high-magic world). If the deceased was a popular person, the entire city might attend the burial ceremony.

**Public Execution:** Someone has been determined by a court, judge or magistrate to have committed a capital offense and is being executed. The execution could be by a variety of means: hanging, drowning, beheading, burning, drawing and quartering, pressing to death, and others have been used historically. In a fantasy world, the convicted could be made to stare at a medusa and be broken up once he was petrified, he might be *disintegrated* by magic, or killed by a *slay living* spell. PCs might wish to witness the event if the person was somebody they brought to justice or have a personal grudge against (or somebody who has been executed before!).

**Murder Attempt:** An attack on a prominent citizen or one known to the PCs leaves the victim seriously wounded or close to death. The person might be in the care of a temple or hospital, hovering near death. A poisoned crossbow bolt might leave the victim unharmed, but only inches away from a painful fate. The victim might be the person who hired the party, someone they had a fight with only a week ago, or a former guide or other person associated with them. Any of these situations cause trouble for the party until the matter is cleared up.

**Kidnapping:** A husband, a wife, or a child—or even a valuable pet!—has been taken away from home and is being held for ransom. Folk will spread rumors about the victim running away and faking the kidnapping, talk will arise about other such incidents and everybody will speculate on the outcome. The resolution can be that the kidnapper is caught by the police, he returns the victim in an honest trade, or he kills his captive with or without collecting the ransom. PCs might be asked to rescue the victim, oversee the transfer of money, or hunt down the kidnappers afterward.

**Insect Plague:** A plague of insects has made a meal out of a farmer's crops. The crops are partially or completely destroyed, and the insects have moved on. The DM must remember that the insects must go somewhere (unless conjured by a magical spell), and the PCs might encounter them again if they leave town. Food prices might go up slightly, but one or more farmers have lost a serious part of their livelihood; the family's personal economy will be bleak. This crisis could push a poor family into abject poverty or reduce the amount a landowning noble can spend on his levies or adventuring prospects.

**Flooding:** Excessive rain has turned the roads and fields to mush. Traffic might be impossible in some areas, difficult in others. There is little or no structural damage, but there might be some loss of crops. This flooding is not of epic proportions, just excessive puddling in low places. If characters must move through the flooded areas, their movement is reduced by one-third.

**Fire:** A building in town or a local farmhouse has caught on fire. The damage might be minor or devastating. Historically, communities rallied around a fire and rescued what they could and fought the fire with buckets of water or sand, since a fire could easily burn out of control and destroy an entire city. As the DM wishes, the fire could have run itself out or been contained by the efforts of the locals, making a few average men the heroes for a change. If the PCs are present, they might try to rescue a person trapped inside, fight the fire with water or magic, or organize the work effort.

**Major Theft:** A valuable item, a shipment, or a large sum of cash has disappeared. The theft is bad news for strangers and might mean trouble for the PCs. The police might or might not have suspects, but everyone who knows of the crime suspects someone in particular of taking the item, and most people voice their opinion if asked. If a PC is

actually arrested over the crime, the other characters might well wish to solve it for themselves before their friend is tried. They might also unintentionally come across the item elsewhere, not knowing about the mad hunt for it in town—that is, until they try to sell it!

**Earthquake:** A minor tremor scares a few people, shakes some loose knick-knacks off of shelves, and starts rumors about volcanoes, umber hulks or worse things, but does no real damage. The cause can be whatever the DM wishes, but most areas in the real world are subject to the occasional tremor, even though most are too light to even be felt. Soon after, a building might crack or collapse, as above.

**Nearby Village Attacked:** Humanoids, a nation at war, monsters, or unfriendly demihumans have attacked a nearby community. There might be no more news and the entire town will worry about relatives, friends, business investment, or their own town. Word might have spread about the results of the attack: minor losses, some fires, or complete devastation. PCs might have their own interest in the nearby town. If not, a NPC they know might ask them to check up on the neighbors.

**Tax Collection:** Some or all citizens are required to pay a tax. The tax might be seasonal, related to a specific occasion, or a new tax on goods or services. Visitors might or might not be required to pay. The tax creates muttering and discontent, but the extent of the reaction is determined by the general state of the nation. Taxes are often low compared to the outrageous quantities of gold carried by adventurers but can be a major obstacle to the common people. Depending on the monetary system used in the campaign, goods might be collected instead of coins for those unable to pay. Taxes are often raised to cover public works or military spending.

**Canal:** Newer farms and more people might mean that a canal must be dug to bring them water. Possibly the river has changed course and the water has moved instead of the people. Either way, a canal is being built to channel fresh water to a large group of people. PCs in dire need of cash might help dig, serve as guards against humanoids and monsters, or use magic to assist. Landowning PCs might be helped or hindered by the path of the new canal.

**Public Punishment:** Less extreme than an execution, the punishment of a criminal might still be a public spectacle. He might be locked into a stockade and berated and abused by anyone passing by (these people should remember that the victim, most likely a neighbor, will be released soon). The criminal might be flogged or beaten. For serious crimes the criminal might be maimed: cutting off the hand of a thief or gouging out a person's eyes have been ordered as punishment. If the DM wishes, the wizard spell blindness might substitute for the latter, and merciful regimes might allow for a priest to cure wounds to stop bleeding from a severed hand.

**Extreme Weather:** Snow, fog, rain, sleet, or wind can limit visibility (and reduce the effectiveness of missile fire) of characters who find themselves outdoors. The exact penalties depend on the weather conditions and are clearly described in the *DMG*. The lack of visibility might cause some concern over attacks by humanoid tribes, monsters or enemy nations. Rain might also lead to

flooding, and wind or snow might bring about the collapse of an old building.

**Press Gang:** A press gang, looking for unwitting citizens to beat into submission, is recruiting reluctant people for induction into the army or navy. Navies, especially, use this method, because once the ship sets sail, it will be weeks or months before any draftees find a chance to desert. By then, the hapless souls have learned a worthwhile skill and might even sign up again voluntarily. PCs might be beset by a press gang, a valuable NPC might have been shanghaied while the PCs were elsewhere, or a noble might wish to hire the PCs to stop this illegal practice (if it is illegal in the DM's world).

**Moat:** Having discovered that a strong wall is not enough, the people might decide that a moat must be dug around the town. A strong lord could dig a moat around his castle, be it in or near the town. A moat provides the same opportunity for drudgery work for the PCs as a canal.

**Search:** A group of concerned citizens or a gathering of the constabulary has joined together to search for a lost child, an escaped convict, a suspected criminal, stolen treasure, a rumored lycanthrope, or possibly even escaped slaves. Any strangers are questioned closely, and those that prove honorable might be asked to help. A search can provide players with a chance to get on the good side of important persons in the community. They need not solve the problem (but that certainly wouldn't hurt) but need only try hard and share in the disappointment of the town if the problem can't be solved.

**Duel:** A duel might be a druidic duel for position, a duel of honor between nobles, or a type of trial by combat. PCs might find themselves involved in a duel, acting as seconds or judges, called upon to cure the losers or asked to bring to justice someone who practices illegal duels. Such a person might be deadly in one on one combat and would not hesitate to issue a challenge that would be illegal to accept but just as dangerous to refuse in some cultures

**Opening:** A new temple, a school, a library, a hospital, or a town meeting hall is being opened for the people to use. It could be a first, a replacement or an expansion of existing facilities. In most cases, it will need workers or volunteers. PCs might make donations, round up help, or be asked to provide help in the construction of the new building. Most likely, they use the facility just like any other citizen.

**Races/Games:** People compete indirectly as well as against each other. Archery contests, foot races, horse races, and wide variety of track & field events might be held. Many of these involve throwing an exceptionally heavy item, like a shotput or hammer. Like gladiatorial games, races or contests produce an instant, temporary hero. He might be the youth who grooms the PCs' horses, a son or daughter of a retired adventurer, or a member of a rival adventuring group. The people might ask the PCs to judge events, donate prize money, or allow the town to use part of their land, if they own a temple or any large common area. They could always compete, of course.

**Marriage:** Sometime between birth and death, most people become husbands or wives. A wedding is always a happy occasion (except perhaps for former lovers) and feasting and celebrating are expected. PCs might know (or be!) the bride or groom and might attend as guests or participants. If they are guests, gifts might be appropriate. This situation might cause some squirming among the players. They can hardly give a bride a suit of old armor or *dagger +1*. They probably have to purchase a new or original gift and this decision can be interesting to role play.

**Agricultural Events:** Certain events throughout the year are noteworthy for their demand on the manpower of the town. Harvest, shearing, or lambing might employ every able-bodied person for a couple of weeks. This much activity raises spirits, encourages teamwork and brings the people together. The people are busy but happy for the work. Although not exactly agricultural, this event might also include events noteworthy to hunters or fishermen, like the return of migratory birds, fish, or whales.

**Birth:** The arrival of children is always noteworthy among the elves and dwarves, who rarely have children, and in societies with demihuman populations, there are grand announcements of their birth, especially for rare multiple births. Among any race, the birth of a noble heir might change the status of an older illegitimate or adopted child, or another relative of the father (or mother in some societies). People gossip about the paternity of such children, especially if the supposed father is old or often absent. This talk provides much amusement and speculation for the common folk, who will bring it up to PCs who go out of their way seeking rumors. Married or promiscuous PCs might find themselves with a surprise announcement at this time, but the DM is advised not to force something that affects a PC this much without being certain that a birth is a role-playing challenge that the player would be willing to accept.

**Road:** Trees are being cleared and the terrain is being flattened for a road. The road's width will vary with its perceived importance, ranging from a track little wider than a wagon to 50' or more if the road is being built to allow for military movement. Roads might or might not be paved, but more often are not. Bricks, gravel, or large flagstones might surface the road if subject to heavy wheeled traffic. Roads must always have a beginning and an end and neither one needs to be in the immediate area. Like any other major construction project, PCs can help out in a variety of ways here.

**Wall:** The town might build its first wall to keep out invaders or might add to the existing wall to cover homes and shops that have sprung up outside the walls due to growth. Existing walls might also need to be replaced for different reasons. The wall might also surround a large temple complex or fortress in or near the town.

**Faith Magic Casting:** A temple in the area is gathering its worshippers to cast a faith magic spell. Nearly any of the faith magic spells mentioned in the *Tome of Magic* are appropriate, or it could be a new spell unique to the DM's world. Whatever the spell, the people gathered know many, if not all, of the others there and the casting will be a grand social event. PCs might be members or even priests of the temple casting the spell. Priest characters are naturally expected to help with organization and services. Before the actual casting, the priests might insist on a service and many blessings of the more mundane variety. Afterward, the priest thanks all of the participants and probably serves a meal. There are congratulations all around. The crowd slowly dissolves, and the gathering becomes quite festive. The common man is again a hero, having protected his church or worked some magic, and the people want to celebrate.

**Bard:** A famous bard might visit the city, either as a destination or part of a longer journey. The DM can refer to the *Complete Bard's Handbook* for ideas on the bard's musical abilities, fame, and statistics. She might be only a mediocre

musician but well known for scandalous escapades or revolutionary thoughts or ideas. She might be a masterful singer and command high prices for performances. Of course, not all entertainers are actual bards. The "bard" might be a 0-level character or member of another class with exceptional talent and ability.

**Gladiatorial Games:** These can range from simple wrestling matches on a dirt pit to enormous jousting tournaments involving the neighboring knights and nobles. Many communities will see a take-on-all-comers wrestling contests sometimes set up in the town markets. Fencing, boxing, or martial arts are common as well. These contests are rarely fatal, but can be very brutal. Injuries are common and clerics are not always on hand to help out the wounded. Betting is rampant at these games, with the government either partaking or trying to suppress it with varying degrees of energy and success. The winner of these games is quite popular for some time within the city, at least until he loses to somebody else the next time around. PCs might join in, watch for a rival, or use the games as an opportunity to seek out new party members. Gladiatorial games area a great way for a DM to introduce a new PC or player.

**Local Hero:** A local hero—adventurer or phony adventurer—returns to his hometown or the setting of a great victory. He probably saved the town at some point in the past, or at least people think he did. The hero might even be a local person who has travelled to the capital to represent the town in some contest, whether skill at arms, poetry, music, or whatever. He might have become famous and is returning to share his new wealth with his friends and family. He might be coming to say goodbye and return to the capital to keep doing whatever it was that took him away. He might have been a former party member, a relative of one of the party, or a complete stranger.

**Pilgrims:** The pilgrims are seeking a holy relic or site and the PCs' city is en route. There might be enough pilgrims to overwhelm the capabilities of the city's inns and hostels, and they might have to make a temporary camp or ask to stay with locals. Some of these locals might join their journey when they hear about the dedication of the pilgrims or the interesting places they will pass through to reach their destination. Merchants welcome peaceful pilgrims with open arms, for they will need food, supplies, and services. Some groups might include troublemakers, depending on the faith and alignment of the power they serve. PCs might have to monitor the group for trouble, guide the group through dangerous terrain or hostile territory (to or past the town) or mediate between the pilgrim leaders and the city.

**Bridge:** A new bridge is being built across a river that formerly could be crossed only by ford or ferry. The bridge could be a replacement for one torn away by flooding, destroyed in a war, or collapsed naturally due to age. Depending on the government of the area, the workers could be hired, temporary conscripts, volunteers, or slaves. They might be of the same race as the townspeople or might be foreigners brought in for the job. In addition to the duties of other construction projects, PCs might have to clear out hostile underwater races or bargain for permission with neutral races such as lizard men.

**Wargames:** Stationed troops might be training, it might be time for seasonal or annual militia exercises, or troops could be stepping up alertness in preparation for a conflict. Either way, the fields and open spaces in or near the town will see much movement of armed troops, who do not appreciate trespassers in their training areas. PCs must be careful with surreptitious or nighttime activities as they might be mistaken for spies if caught in suspicious circumstances.

**Sage:** A master of academics or a student of some field of study might visit the city for field research, a lecture, or personal matters. He is well-versed, or at least sounds well-versed in one or more areas of knowledge. He might be helpful and respectful, conceited and haughty, or expensive and reclusive. The DM should decide on the reason for the stay, as it will dictate how long the sage remains in the city. Visiting relatives might mean a few days to a couple of weeks; extensive research might involve a long-term residency. If the PCs have previously suffered from lack of background information when adventuring, the sage's appearance might coincide with an adventure, or he might prove frustrating and leave again the day before they need him.

**Holy Man:** Not quite a saint or an avatar, but still a venerated member of a popular faith might visit the town. He might be coming to visit the temple, passing through on his way to somewhere else, or on a quest. He will stop at the temple of the appropriate faith, might give a special service or speech and will meet important worshippers (that is, those who donate large amounts of time or money).

**Holiday:** A local holiday might celebrate a town hero, the birth of a child, or an ancient religious occasion. Holidays are not always annual events, but might be a spontaneous command of the ruler to celebrate nearly any event. The event might be marked by gift-giving, parades, or religious ceremonies. PCs can use the occasion to host a party, give servants the day off, or visit their neighbors.

**Fair/Carnival/Circus.** A seasonal or travelling fair comes to the city. There will be acrobatic shows, captured monsters on display, and feats of dexterity and strength. Jugglers, clowns, and tightrope walkers will amaze and entertain the townsfolk. PCs might have their fortunes told, have their pockets picked, or encounter old friends. A fair is a chance to relax, have fun, and might be win a prize or two.

**Ambassador.** A nearby race or nation might send an ambassador to learn about the city, teach about his own customs and otherwise ease relations between the two peoples. His coming might presage an increase in immigration or follow such an increase. Some people welcome the new people, seeing them as lifegivers to an old town or trade, others will see them as rivals or troublemakers.

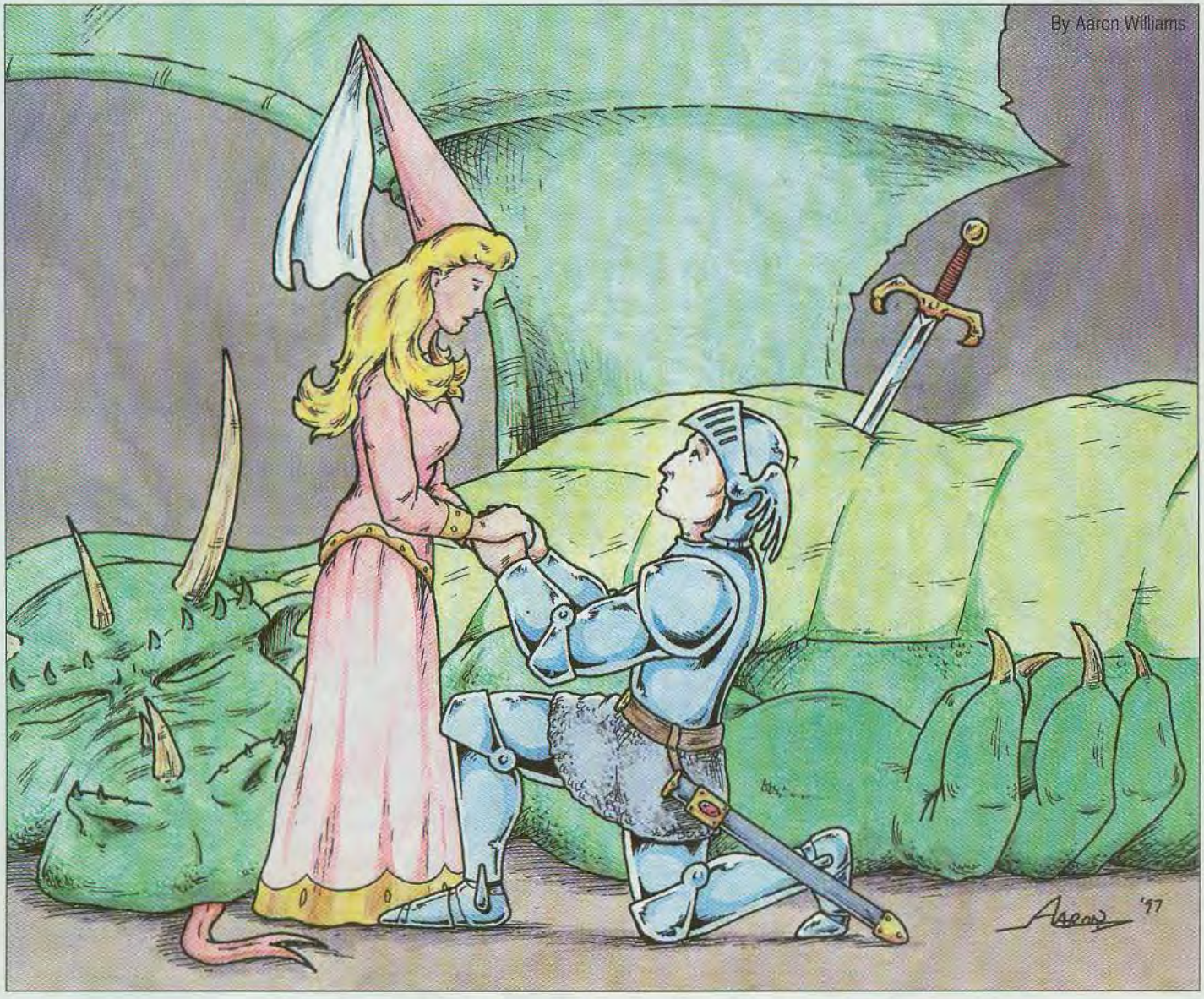
**Garrisoning of Town:** Either the government has decided that the town is a position of military importance and is stationing troops there permanently, or the situation has changed to make troops there unnecessary. The garrison are army troops if there is no coast or major port, or army or navy (or both) if the place has a major port. The attitude of the people depends on their relations with the military and the government. If troops are moving in, civil positions will open for capable locals (possibly PCs). Recruitment officers will search the town for skilled warriors and either draft them or offer them incentives, possibly commissions for skilled warriors. Generally, withdrawing troops causes hardships for many merchants. Many of these merchants might decide to head elsewhere with their goods, making certain items hard to find.

**Holy Artifact.** A holy artifact might be taken on a tour of the cities where the faith's followers are common. The item is not one of the artifacts described in the *DMG* but a mundane artifact of importance only to those followers of the same faith or possibly a rival faith—the tombstone of a martyr, the robe of a saint, or an ancient papyrus scroll, now

blank, that was used to resurrect the king. The artifact travels with several priests and guards, as well as a retinue of lower level functionaries with menial duties who are along for the ride, all following the orders of a senior priest. PCs might help guard the item while it stays in town, host the item and the followers if one or more of the PCs are priests, or be caught up in any of several adventures concerning the item itself. Suppose, for example, the PCs somehow discover the item has been replaced by a fake! The priests and guards might wish to kill the PCs, buy their silence, discredit them, or convert them. A rival priesthood might offer to pay the PCs a large sum to steal or destroy the item. The item might suddenly and temporarily gain magical powers of healing or protection, making it more mysterious and valuable.

**Enemy Killed:** A hated enemy, monster, or humanoid chief is killed or captured. His body might be brought back to town by the militia, the regular military, or a band of adventurers. He could even have been killed by a faction within his own organization. His death might mean the roads are free to use, the tribute no longer needs to be paid, or the rebellion is squashed. The enemy might be the one that got away from the PCs if they recently undertook a partially successful expedition against the enemy, thus tying up that adventure. Freedom from oppression allows the town to breathe a collective sigh of relief.

*Lloyd has an exciting, challenging career as a pizza delivery driver. He says, "Nothing stimulates the brain quite like driving 500 miles a week within a five-mile-radius area."*




LOOK, I APPRECIATE BEING RESCUED AND EVERYTHING, BUT I THINK WE SHOULD STAY "JUST FRIENDS."

# THE ECOLOGY OF The SHAMBLING MOUND

by Johnathan M. Richards

**illustrated by Valerie A. Valusek**

The doors of the meeting-hall slammed open, and out staggered a motley group of robed men, choking for air, tears streaming from their eyes. Billowing smoke followed them out the doors, carrying with it the most foul stench this side of the Abyss. One man slumped back against the outside wall, his legs no longer strong enough to support him. Sliding into a rather undignified position in the filth of the street, he gasped for breath and sputtered out the words he desperately, at that moment, wanted to say:

"This meeting ... of the Monster Hunters ... Association ... is hereby closed."

Several others staggered over to him. "I'm terribly, terribly sorry," muttered Zantoullios. "I must have gotten the mixture wrong. Perhaps if I had added more beholder eyes and eased off on the skunk glands ...?"

"Never mind," replied Dreelix, getting back up to his feet. "I think it best if you perfected it in your own lab before presenting it to the Association."

Now that the fresh air outside had cleared his lungs, Dreelix was starting to feel his old self. Brushing dirt from his robes, he pulled himself to his not-too-considerable height and did his best to look imperious. "In fact, I'm banning you from demonstrating further untested mixtures during Association meetings, and charging you for the cost of cleaning out the meeting hall! Grindle, make a note of that."

Grindle the Coin-Counter sidled up, ledger in hand, and scribbled furiously. "Got it," was his only reply.

Willowquisp approached, lecture notes in hand. "What about my notes on the shambling mound?" he asked. "We'll all need to be briefed before tomorrow's Hunt."

"It can wait," replied Dreelix. "You can brief us on the road, tomorrow."

"But—" began Willowquisp.

"I've already formally closed the meeting," snapped Dreelix, as if that explained everything. "Now let's get out of here. I want everyone planning on attending the Hunt to meet here at sunrise tomorrow. Laggards will be left behind!" With that, he stormed off, head held high and nose upturned.

Same old Dreelix, thought Willowquisp, shaking his head sadly and returning his notes to a side-pocket in his robes.

◆◆◆

The next morning found a handful of Monster Hunters flying rapidly through the air, courtesy of Dreelix's own enchanted carpet. They sped over the city, past acres upon acres of farmland, and on toward the forested lands to the east. Finally, Dreelix lowered the carpet into a clearing, where a green-clad druid waited for them, playing a cheerful melody on a hand-carved flute.

"Greetings, Delbert," Dreelix said, as he watched everyone disembark from his carpet. "I trust you're ready to aid us?"

"Aye, for the agreed price," responded the druid, scratching at his beard. Dreelix nodded to Grindle, who handed over a cloth bag wrapped around a set of silver scimitars. Delbert inspected the weapons, ran an expert hand over their edges, and announced, "They'll do just fine."

"Well then, lead us to our prey. Spells ready, men, and look alive!"

As Delbert prepared and cast his *locate animals and plants* spell, Willowquisp pulled out his notes and looked toward Dreelix, who was rolling up his carpet. "Perhaps now you're ready to hear about the shambling mound?"

Dreelix sighed. "Is it really necessary? The druid leads us to it, we throw a *charm plants* spell or two at it, chop off its head, and there you go! No fuss, no bother, and no need to hear all about the creature's life history, favorite foods, and mating rituals! The sooner we get back to Old Gumphrey with its brain, the sooner he can start on those *potions of longevity* for us."

"Well then, it might help to know that a shambling mound's brain is not even located in its head," said Willowquisp, arms crossed and a smirk on his face.

"What?" squeaked Dreelix. "What nonsense! Where else would it be?"

"Right in his chest cavity," replied Willowquisp, poking Dreelix in the breastbone, "right about there."

Dreelix let out a heavy sigh. "Oh, all right," he said, a look of exasperation on his face. "Tell us about the shambling mound, but make it quick."

Willowquisp returned to his notes. "Shambling mounds are born during intense electrical storms," he began, "when the full fury of the elements is at its peak. A bolt of lightning strikes a patch of rotting vegetation and imbues it with a primal consciousness, an awareness of self, and the ability to alter its shape, to move, to grow.

"Exactly why this is so remains a mystery. Certainly, all attempts at artificially creating a shambling mound have failed. *Lightning bolt, chain lightning,* and

even *lightning strike* spells have proven ineffectual in providing the spark of life. Some wizards postulate that it requires a bolt of elemental energy from the quasi-plane of lightning itself,[1] while certain priests speculate that shambling mounds can be created only by the will of the gods. While neither case has been proven to date, the priests' claim of godly intervention might help explain why the shambling mound always takes on a humanoid form; it might simply be created in the deity's image, as was man himself."[2]

"Boring," commented Dreelix under his breath. Willowquisp ignored him and pressed on.

"In any case, the initial lightning strike imparts the spark of intelligence in the rotting vegetation. The part actually struck by the lightning houses the creature's intelligence. For lack of a better term, this is the creature's brain. The rest of the vegetation in contact with the brain is soon sculpted into a humanoid body. Thus, the shambling mound as it is normally seen is formed.

"All shambling mounds conform to the same basic humanoid structure. As their name suggests, they are shaped like mounds, roughly six feet in diameter at the bottom at 'birth,' tapering to a two-foot-diameter 'head.' Two arms and two legs are formed, and—almost always—crude facial features.[3] Digits are usually present on the 'hands,' but this is less common on the 'feet.' In fact most shambling mounds don't really have feet at all, but rather two trunklike legs. The brain is located in the center of the torso, where it is protected by the heaviest vegetation.

"To the best knowledge, no shambling mound ever started life smaller than the dimensions I just mentioned; it is believed that a lesser amount of vegetation cannot hold the spark of life endowed by the lightning strike. Occasionally, though, a shambling mound will be 'born' much larger than normal, and while all shambling mounds have the ability to grow, they tend to keep the same basic body proportions.

"Even though shambling mounds maintain a humanoid appearance, do not let that fool you into making assumptions about their body makeup. First of all, with the exception of the brain, a shambler's body parts are all roughly homogeneous. The vegetation making up the head is basically no different from the vegetation making up the arms, legs, or torso. Therefore, cut an arm off a shambling mound, and it merely redistributes the vegetable mass of its body to grow a new one.[4] The same thing is true of any extremity, including the head. This brings up another point—the head of a shambling mound is merely ornamental. As previously noted, it does not house the brain, and, although it often sports facial features, a shambling mound's face is not the center of its senses. Rather, its sensory organs are spread evenly throughout its body.

"The senses of a shambling mound are unusual. It is a well-documented fact that they can hear. Their bodies are covered with tiny plant fibers able to pick up sound waves in the air. Thus, they are able to 'hear' in all directions at once, which makes it difficult to sneak up behind one. Their sense of hearing is unique in that they are not discomfited by loud noises, whether the irritating scream of a shrieker or the painful blast of an adult androsphinx.

"As with their sense of hearing, shambling mounds are able to 'see' in all directions at once, but their 'sight' is not like the sense of sight as we know it. Instead, they sense electrical fields. It is a known fact (perhaps more well known to sages than to the general populace, but a known fact nonetheless) that living beings generate fields of electricity around them, and these are the fields that the shambling mound senses. It is believed that the mound's electrical sense is somewhat like being able to see a three-dimensional contour image of everything around it. The exact range of this sense is unknown. It is unlikely that a shambling mound is able to distinguish colors, but they do seem to differentiate between light and dark.

"While shambling mounds can use their senses in all directions at once, they operate as if they were normal humanoids—turning to 'face' a threat, attacking only from the front, and so on. Certainly, it seems the mound could attack someone directly behind it as easily as it could someone in front, but for one reason or another it will always turn around and face its enemy before attacking. The reason for this may have much to do with the reason it adopts a humanoid form in the first place.

"One speculation is that the shambling mound is, in fact, inhabited by the spirit of a deceased human or demihuman. This would explain the mound's preference for a humanoid shape, but it would also make it a form of undead, and no shambling mound has ever been successfully turned by a priest. It is unaffected by holy water as well, so the odds are that there is no truth to this supposition."[5]

"Then why even mention it?" demanded Dreelix. "Come on, man, the spell's going to wear off before we even get to the mound at this rate!"

"Point taken," admitted Willowquisp. "Lead on, Delbert; I'll finish the briefing as we walk." To Dreelix he added, "I'm about to get to the combat part."

"About time," mumbled Dreelix.

The party snaked through the forest, following the druid's lead. Willowquisp continued: "The mound's vegetable body gives it some unique properties. The wet muck throughout its body protects it from fire damage, and since most of the plants making up its body are already dead and decaying, cold usually has little effect on it as well.[6] For the same reason, shambling mounds do not

1. This would require a dimensional rift or gate connecting the Prime Material Plane to the quasi-elemental plane of lightning, making the "birth" of a shambling mound a rare event indeed.

2. If this is the case, shambling mounds are probably the creations of a deity of decay, considering that they are made of rotting vegetation.

3. The level of detail of a mound's facial features varies from individual to individual. Some have no features whatsoever, while others redistribute their vegetable mass in order to come up with the best possible "face" they can—berries or flowers where the eyes would be, large leaves for ears, and so on. Some have gone so far as to include twig "teeth" or "beards" made of moss. This might be a deliberate attempt at deception, or it might be instinctual behavior.

4. Such a redistribution of the mound's vegetable mass leaves the mound the same size it was initially, but the vegetable fibers making up its body are now not quite as tightly packed together. As a result, each time a shambling mound "regrows" a missing appendage, it suffers a +1 penalty to its Armor Class. Appendage regeneration takes a full round of concentration, during which the mound cannot engage in melee.

A full 12 hours in contact with damp, rotting vegetation restores a mound to its normal Armor Class. During this time, the mound incorporates the new foliage into its body, making it as dense as it once was.

5. There's no reason why the shambling mound couldn't be a form of undead, if that's the way you wish to run them in your campaign. An undead shambling mound would require the following modifications: turned according to its hit dice (so turned as a spectre, initially); immune to *charm, hold, sleep,* poison, and death magic; holy water causes it 1d8+2 hp damage (its damp, vegetable nature absorbs the liquid, so it inflicts more damage than usual). The creature would retain all of its normal characteristics, including XP earned for defeating it. This would be an appropriate form of undead for the spirits of nature-loving beings such as elves, halflings, druids, or rangers. Even if shambling mounds are not normally undead creatures in your campaign world, having a unique undead mound as the result of a curse aimed at a specific individual makes for a memorable departure from the ordinary shambling mound.

6. Half or no damage, depending on whether it makes its saving throw.

need sunlight to survive, unlike most plants.

"In addition, the pliability of the mound's body makes it immune to blunt weapons. Piercing and slashing weapons, for that matter, tend to cause little damage to shambling mounds.[7]

"In terms of magical attacks, the shambling mound is naturally affected by such plant-based spells as *charm plants, hold plant,* and *anti-plant shell*. The elemental plant spirits known as nightshades or wood woses can summon shambling mounds after elaborate rituals.[8] Communication with a mound is possible with a *speak with plants* spell, although the mound's low intelligence makes for limited conversation. They have no language of their own and, in fact, make no vocalizations at all (not surprising, since they lack vocal cords).

"Some spells affect shambling mounds in unusual ways. As part of the mound's body is composed of muck and mud, a *transmute mud to rock* spell paralyzes it for a short while.[9] A *part water* spell cast directly on a shambling mound sends the water soaked into its plant mass flowing out of its sides. While this causes no damage to the creature, it does make it more vulnerable to fire than normal.[10]

"Perhaps the most famous unusual spell effect associated with the shambling mound is the *lightning bolt* and similar spells. Due to the creature's affinity to lightning, electricity-based attacks actually cause the mound to grow in size and power, adding one foot to its overall height.[11] The mounds suffer no damage from electrical spells, absorbing the entire energy of the spell to trigger their growth. This is the only way shambling mounds ever grow larger, for they do not grow naturally with age.

"Shambling mounds most often live in wet areas where vegetation is abundant. Rain forests, swamps, and marshes make up their normal living areas, although some have been known to lair in damp, underground locations. Continued contact with water and/or rotting vegetation has a beneficial effect on the mound: 12 hours of immersion in water (including exposure during a rainfall) or among damp foliage completely heals any damage suffered by the creature, and the mound emerges fully restored and at the peak of its abilities.

"Mounds need not sleep but often spend hours immersed in their elements, whether they need to be healed or not. This may have a soothing effect on the beasts, or they might need to do so in order to maintain the composition of their forms. Often, they remain flattened and immobile in their shallow pools of water or bogs, waiting for some unsuspecting creature to walk over them, at which point they rise up and attack.

"Although they often have very human-like hands, with well-defined digits, shambling mounds have never been known to use weapons, nor do they wear armor or use magical items of any kind. Occasionally, such items are found in their lairs, but these are incidental treasures left behind by previous victims.

"It should come as no surprise that shambling mounds have a heavy odor of decay about them. In swamp-like environments, this is not a disadvantage, since the surrounding area generally smells more or less the same as the mound.[12]

"Rotting vegetation is a breeding ground for many types of mold and fungus, and the shambling mound is no stranger to either. Often these growths comprise a part of the vegetation that makes up a mound's body, living in a kind of symbiosis with the mound. Such growths can consist of but are not limited to brown mold (on subterranean shambling mounds only), russet mold, yellow mold (small patches, never a colony), phycomids, and obliviax.[13] However, most mold growths found on a shambling mound are of the small, harmless variety.[14]

"Unfortunately, shambling mounds are often the homes of various forms of animal life, as well. While some of these are relatively inoffensive, others add an extra dose of danger to an otherwise already dangerous creature. These include spiders, centipedes, rot grubs, throat leeches, ear seekers, and giant ticks.[15] When the near-helpless victim is being smothered into the body of the shambling mound, he is vulnerable to attacks by any animals living on the swamp creature."

"As if suffocation wasn't enough to worry about," snickered Zantoullios.

"Agreed," said Willowquisp. He continued: "Shambling mounds are solitary creatures, seldom found together in groups. They are completely sexless, and do not reproduce at all, not even by budding or other asexual methods common to plants.[16] Each mound is a separate entity, unique to itself, and having very little to do with others of its kind.

"When there are more than one in the same area, it is usually because there is an abundance of food. Mounds are omnivorous, eating a wide variety of plant life, and any animals (or adventurers) foolish enough to get in their way. Mounds eat through a network of roots and tendrils located throughout their bodies, so it isn't uncommon to see one feeding with its appendages or torso, usually immediately after crushing its victim into its body and waiting for it to suffocate. In fact, the head is used least of all in feeding, as it is generally impractical for the creature to do so.

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7. Piercing and slashing weapons do only half-damage when they hit at all, but the creature's 0 Armor Class reflects the fact that most weapon strikes cause it no serious damage.

8. See the *Monstrous Compendium® Annual,* Volume One.

9. *Transmute mud to rock* causes 2d8 hp damage to the mound and immobilizes it for 1d4 rounds. During this time it shifts the plant fibers of its body around the petrified mud caused by the spell, until it has reformed its entire body away from the rock formation. Until it has done so, the mound is unable to attack, but this is a once-per-encounter effect, as once the mound has freed itself from the rock it no longer has mud making up its body and therefore is immune to the spell thereafter. However, over time (1–6 hours, depending upon conditions), exposure to its natural environment restores the muck normally found in these creatures.

10. Shambling mounds finding themselves in this predicament suffer half or no damage from fire, depending on the saving throw. This effect also lasts only until the mound has a chance to soak up water again in its natural environment.

11. Each electrical attack also adds one hit die and associated hit points to the mound.

12. In such areas, due to the creature's ability to blend in with its environment and remain silent, even when moving, its enemies suffer a –3 penalty to their surprise rolls. However, in underground locations, the odor of decomposition that always accompanies a shambling mound often gives it away. This adds a bonus of +2 to its opponents' surprise rolls.

13. Shambling mounds are immune to the spore effects of the russet and yellow strains of mold. Obliviax patches in a symbiotic relationship with a shambling mound will not drain that creature's memory. Similarly, a phycomid will use a shambling mound as a host organism, sprouting its mushroom-like growths in the mound, but this does not harm the mound.

Creatures like green and olive slime will not become symbiotic partners with a shambling mound, as they eat away at the plant material in the mound's body, eventually killing it. Violet fungi is usually too large a growth to make up part of a mound's body; the mound would have to have at least 15 Hit Dice before such an arrangement was feasible.

14. There shouldn't be more than one type of "monster" fungus/mold in symbiosis with a shambling mound at any given time.

15. Spiders include normal-sized ones, as well as the "hairy" and "large" varieties. Centipedes include the huge, giant, and normal types. Again, don't overdo it by having too many types of animals living on or in a single shambling mound.

16. While they do not reproduce, neither do they age. Shambling mounds are immortal, and while they certainly can be killed, if left alone they have the potential to live forever. This is because they are not made up of living material, which ages and dies over time, but rather decomposing material, which is already dead. The rotting vegetation comprising a mound's body is constantly being replenished by its time "healing" in water, bogs, or damp vegetation. As long as the environment exists to support these periodic "baths," the shambling mound can live indefinitely.

"Shambling mounds have been around for a long time. Because of the way they are brought to life, they may have been a part of the planet much longer than any of the intelligent humanoid races. Indeed, some priests consider the shambling mound an experiment by the gods, a trial life form before they committed themselves to the creation of the humanoids.

"In any case, the mound existed in mankind's early history, for recent archaeological digs have unearthed records of a god worshiped by a tribe of savages. By the description of the god, his powers, and the ceremonies performed by the savages, it seems likely that the 'god' was a shambling mound, worshiped as a god of death, decay, and disease, and fed a series of sacrifices to appease its anger. The odds are that this wasn't an isolated incident, and that this type of 'deification' of the mound has occurred before in many primitive cultures."

Willowquisp folded his notes and returned them to the pocket in his robe. "Done?" asked Dreelix, startled by the sudden silence.

"Quite," retorted Willowquisp, noting that once again his efforts were falling on deaf ears.

"Good timing, too," added Delbert, pointing to a clearing ahead of them. "There's your mound."

Dreelix rubbed his hands together greedily. "Excellent!" he hissed. "Gentlemen, let's get to it!"

◆◆◆

"Well, how did it go?" asked Buntleby of his friend Willowquisp the next day, as the two sat eating a shared meal at their favorite outdoor cafe.

"A travesty, a fiasco, a complete and total failure," replied Willowquisp, shaking his head sadly back and forth. Then he broke into a wide grin. "Dreelix was furious! You should have seen him stomping up and down after we all fled the scene!"

"I'd loved to have been there," admitted Buntleby, smiling. "So what happened?"

"Well, I gave my briefing, and as usual, Dreelix paid attention to only half of it, at best. So when the druid located a shambler for us, he went charging in with his *charm plants* spell. Got the shambler all right; didn't count on the white growths interspersed throughout the shambler's body being phycomids. So he commands the shambler to stand still, then walks up to it and tries to carve the brain out of its stomach."

"Oh, no," groaned Buntleby, covering his closed eyes with a hand over his forehead.

"Oh, yes, my friend, oh yes indeed. Dreelix gets a face full of spores, breathes them in, and starts sprouting mushrooms out of his nose!"

Buntleby almost choked on his biscuit at that moment, and had to take a quick swig of wine to get it down. Finally, he got out, "So then what?"

"Well, we knew we had to have a *cure disease* cast on him, but none of us could do so, so we—"

"What about the druid?" interrupted Buntleby.

Willowquisp shook his head. "No. Outside a druid's purview."

"Ah, of course. I'm sorry, please continue."

"So we had to put him in *temporal stasis* until we could bring him to a temple back here in the city. Fortunately, Grindle knew the command words to Dreelix's carpet."

"And I don't suppose Dreelix was grateful that you saved his life?"

"Pshaw!" retorted Willowquisp. "You know Dreelix. As it is, he was enraged that we didn't go back after the mound once he was safely in stasis. 'A completely wasted trip,' he called it. And what's worse, now we'll have to pay the druid again if we want him to sniff us out another shambler."

Buntleby smiled into his wineglass. "So when's the next Hunt?"

"Just as soon as Grindle can get his hands on enough new silver scimitars to pay off the druid. Tomorrow, if we're lucky."

"Let me know for sure, will you, Willowquisp? I definitely want in on this one!"

*Johnathan M. Richards was introduced to the AD&D® game by his cousins Harry and Tom 20 years ago. He's still trying to figure out how to get that glowing sword out of the alcove in the far wall across the 80' octagonal pit of acid.*

By Joseph Pillsbury

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# Finder's Band

by Kate Novak & Jeff Grubb

**illustrated by Rags Morales**

They have traveled the Realms and journeyed to the furthest planes. They have hobnobbed with gods and fought fetid horrors of the Abyss. They have roamed the streets of Sigil and battled the Zhentarim. One of their number has been beyond the stars themselves. They have been the allies of some gods, pawns of others, the sworn foes of still more. They are legends in the making. They are the friends and allies of Finder, god of change, and they are detailed herewithin.

Finder is a young god by the eternal definition of the great power, and a weak one, a mere demipower that inherited the portfolio of the now-dead Moander. Finder is in many ways still mortal, still holding onto the trappings of his previous life, and is only now learning what it means to be a powerful deity of Faerûn. For that reason he is more friendly, more easily amused, and more tolerant than gods who carry more weighty portfolios, and those who have listened to the prayers and supplications of their followers for aeons.

Finder has traveled with these individuals and sought their aid in a wide matter of affairs. They include Joel the Rebel Bard: most-favored of Finder's priests: Jas, a former spelljammer captain and deep-hearted cynic; and Holly Harrowslough, a paladin dedicated the service of Lathander Morninglory. The fact that one of his trusted companions is in the service of another (more powerful) god does not bother Finder much, though it sometimes makes for interesting adventures.

Joel is the least experienced of the three: A young master bard from an illustrious family, he broke ranks with his heritage to embrace a new faith with new ideas toward music and creation. Only recently has he stepped away from his studies in familiar Berdusk and ventured forth into the world beyond. Still, his level-headed approach and honesty has served him well in his travels.

Jas has traveled the farthest, from Waterdeep to the back streets of Saerloon, from the northern wastes of Faerûn to the worlds that lay beyond the crystal sphere. She has seen many friends die, and she has hardened her heart against the eventuality of being hurt again. Yet a bright beacon of hope shines beneath the world-weary mask she portrays, and she is a trusted companion.

Holly is the youngest but has spent much of her life at war. A native of Daggerdale, she joined Randal Morn in his continual battle against the forces of Zhentil Keep. Wise in the ways of war, the young paladin remains honorable and honest, and only recently has she learned to see the world in terms more varied than simple black and white. Together they have fought alongside each other (and occasionally against each other), and grown in their abilities and understanding.

The list of their foes have grown with their abilities and adventures: the followers of Iyachtu Xvim and their Dark Stalkers; Walinda, the cruel and beautiful priestess of Bane; the foul and deluded baneliches; the Black Network of the Zhentarim; the legions of the the Blood Wars, and some of the Greater Gods themselves. Their allies are equally notable: Randal Morn and his freedom fighters; the saurials of the Lost Vale; certain notable factions of godforbidden Sigil itself, the divine Tymora, and great Lathander Morninglord, God of the Dawn. And of course, the demi-god Finder, still discovering what it means to *be* a god. The story of Joel, Holly, and Jas, and their adventures with Finder, may be found in the books *Finder's Bane* and *Tymora's Luck*. The abilities listed herein are those for the characters after their experiences as Finder's Band.

*Kate Novak and Jeff Grubb are the authors of the Finder's Stone Trilogy and the Harper's Novels* Masquerades, Finder's Bane, *and* Tymora's Luck. *Jeff is also the author of* Lord Toede, *the co-author of* Cormyr—a Novel, *and designer of more game products than one can shake a stick at.*

# Joel the Rebel Bard

**5th-Level bard, 5th Level Priest of Finder**

| | |
|---|---|
| STRENGTH: | 12 |
| DEXTERITY: | 15 |
| CONSTITUTION: | 12 |
| INTELLIGENCE: | 14 |
| WISDOM: | 17 |
| CHARISMA: | 16 |
| AC: | 8 |
| THAC0: | 18 |
| HIT POINTS: | 22 |
| ALIGNMENT: | CG |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS: | Spell Use |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Nil |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil |
| SIZE: | 6'0" |

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Short sword, dagger, crossbow.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Artistic ability-musical composition +1, storytelling; direction sense; etiquette; languages–common, elven common; musical instrument-birdpipes, harp; reading/writing; religion-Faerûnian; singing +1.

**Commonly Memorized Spells:** In his training as a bard, Joel learned the mage spells *change self* and *audible glamer.* As a priest of Finder, Joel has major access to the spheres of all, charm, divination, elemental, and traveler. He has minor access to the spheres of creation and healing. Also as a priest of Finder, Joel has the following powers granted by his god: turn undead, *charm person, ghost pipes, dispel silence,* and *slow rot.* As Finder's most favored priest (one of precisely two), Finder has gifted Joel with the ability to cast a few spells outside these spheres, notably: *entangle, faerie fire, light, speak with animals,* and *charm mammal.*

**Appearance:** Joel is a tall, slender, handsome human male of 21 winters. He has blue eyes, a freckled complexion and bright red, waist-length hair. He wears his hair loose when entertaining and pulled back into a ponytail at the nape of his neck when traveling. He vacillates between keeping clean-shaven and sporting a small, sparse moustache. In clothing, he favors the color blue: a shirt of light blue silk (worn over his leather jerkin), pants of a dusky azure, and a cape and vest of deep blue, trimmed with gold. His vest is cinched with a sturdy sword-belt, from which hangs his scabbard and birdpipes.

**Background:** Joel hails from Berdusk. His family tree is laden with bards back ten generations, and his immediate family is extremely influential in the local church of Milil, God of Music. Between his natural talent and considerable family pressure, he received his title as master bard at the relatively young age of eighteen. While still at barding college, however, he became disenchanted with the constraints of traditional music, and he scandalized his teachers and family with revised versions of the previously sacrosanct hymn to Milil. It was during this time he met Jedidiah of Finder, an elderly bard of a young god, who had long conversations with the talented youth about how music must change and grow, or else grow stale. Convinced of Jedidiah's wisdom and the teaching of Finder, Joel abandoned his career as a bard to become Finder's priest. At this, his family broke all ties with the youth, such that Joel no longer uses his family name. Jedidiah conferred on Joel the title of Rebel Bard in honor of the audacity he showed in breaking with the musical establishment of Berdusk. On his pilgrimage to the Lost Vale, he became embroiled in the plot to resurrect the evil god Bane, and later in a mission to rescue the Luck-Goddesses, Tymora and Beshaba.

**Equipment:** Birdpipes, short sword, leather armor. During his adventures, Joel has on occasion lost all his worldly goods. At least once in such case Finder has been known to restore his priest's beloved birdpipes to him and re-equip him with the bare essentials.

**Magical Items:** On occasion, the Rebel Bard has been entrusted with a piece of the *finder's stone.* The stone is a magical artifact that can send out a beacon to locate a known person (or occasionally an object of power), and is said to help the lost find their way. In addition, in the outer planes the stone serves Joel as a greater power key.

**Role-Playing Notes:** Joel is very personable and ready to help out good people in need. He is more than willing to play the showman when on the stage, but is open and honest with people in day-to-day life, a trait that both endears him to others and makes him vulnerable to being dragged into their problems. He despises tyranny and dislikes rigid social class structures and hierarchies. His primary goal in life is to spread Finder's message to the Realms by encouraging all artists (regardless of field, whether professional and amateur) to give art a chance to grow and change. His greatest worry is that he will prove unworthy of the faith that Finder has in him. Joel's adventures have taken him to the outer planes and the famed extraplanar city of Sigil, but he is most comfortable traveling in Faerûn.

# Jas (Jasmine)

**5th-Level Fighter**

| | |
|---|---|
| STRENGTH: | 11 |
| DEXTERITY: | 16 |
| CONSTITUTION: | 15 |
| INTELLIGENCE: | 12 |
| WISDOM: | 17 |
| CHARISMA: | 13 |
| AC: | 8 |
| THAC0: | 16 |
| HIT POINTS: | 35 |
| ALIGNMENT: | CG |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS: | Aerial Drop |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Nil |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil |
| SIZE: | 5'5" |

**Weapon proficiencies:** Arquebus, dagger, mace, short sword, throwing dagger, weaponless combat.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** Appraising; direction sense; disguise; endurance; gaming; language–common, Giff; navigation; reading/writing.

**Special Attacks:** Jas has combined her fighting and flying abilities so that she can drop from the sky, delivering a blow with her feet to the head or shoulders of her target. The attack deals 2d4 hp damage. If the attack is unexpected, Jas gains a +3 bonus to hit. She cannot use this attack when carrying a passenger.

**Appearance:** Jas is an attractive human woman in her late twenties. Her figure is lean and muscular from years of travel and fighting. She wears her straight, dark black hair very short, and her brown eyes have a cold, hard glint to them. Sprouting from her back are wings that enable her to fly. The wings are magical, and their shape and color change depending on which sphere or plane Jas is in. Following is a list of some of the shapes the wings have taken: *Toril*–white dove-wings, her feathers tinged with dusty pink highlights; *Sigil*–metallic gargoyle wings, colored copper, with a greenish patina; *Phlogiston*–pink butterfly wings; *Astral plane*–silver hummingbird wings; *Ethereal plane*–dragonfly-like wings, clear with blue veins; *Arborea*–eagle-shaped wings with peacock-like feathers; *Abyss*–red bat-wings with gold speckles; *Outlands*–falcon-wings, colored brown, white, and red *Ysgard*–very large, pure white moth-wings; *Elysium*–long, fiery plumes shaped and colored like a phoenix's. The appearance of Jas' wings does not apparently affect her speed or maneuverability: she has adapted to their malleable nature over the years.

**Background:** Jas's parents were paladins from Faerûn; both were murdered when Jas was quite young. She was raised in Waterdeep by a friend of her parents, a tavern keeper named Luna. While Luna was kind, Jas remained emotionally detached from everyone and everything, scarred by the loss of her parents. She ran off in her late teens to search for adventure to fill the void in her life. During that time she gained her wings through mysterious circumstances. Jas is more than mildly embarrassed by the wings, and has only told a few very close friends how she had gotten them. Later Jas was befriended and taken from Toril by the spelljamming sorceress Meredith, who had also been a friend of Jas's parents. Jas has spent the past decade traveling to different spheres and soon had her own spelljamming vessel, a captured illithid nautiloid. Jas only recently returned to Toril, where she was kidnapped by a priestess of the evil god Bane, which led to her meeting Holly and Joel.

**Equipment:** Jas travels light. She carries a short sword and dagger and prefers black leather armor. Having lost most of her possessions in an attack on her spelljammer, Jas's only current keepsake is a black crystal paperweight full of drifting stars–a gift from the paladin Holly Harrowslough.

**Magical Items:** Jas carries a *sword +1 luck blade*–a gift from Tymora. (Its wishes have been used.) Jasmine's wings are also magical, and radiate magic a magical aura as a powerful artifact. The wings cannot be dispelled or otherwise modified by spells.

**Role-Playing Notes:** On the surface Jas appears fun-loving, if sarcastic and worldly. She generally avoids growing close to people, and looks out for herself and her own needs first. She is shrewd and cynical, but not particularly introspective. Jas's wanderings are a futile attempt to forget the family and many friends she has lost. Jas was actually once more powerful, but much of her life energy was drained by a fetch in the Abyss, and occasionally she feels depressed by her sense of weakness. (Before the loss of life energy, she was an 8th-level fighter.) She remains sensitive about her wings and is abrupt, even insulting to those inquiring about them. To her own dismay, Jas still grows attached to certain rare individuals whom she admires. On these occasions, she is a steadfast ally even against her own better judgment.

# Holly Harrowslough

**5th-Level Paladin**

| | |
|---|---|
| STRENGTH: | 13 |
| DEXTERITY: | 9 |
| CONSTITUTION: | 12 |
| INTELLIGENCE: | 10 |
| WISDOM: | 15 |
| CHARISMA: | 17 |
| AC: | 1 |
| THAC0: | 16 |
| HIT POINTS: | 35 |
| ALIGNMENT: | LG |
| SPECIAL ATTACKS: | Nil |
| SPECIAL DEFENSES: | Nil |
| MAGIC RESISTANCE: | Nil |
| SIZE: | 5'10" |

**Weapons proficiencies:** Hand crossbow, dagger, long sword, scimitar, short sword.

**Nonweapon proficiencies:** Fire-building; healing; hunting; languages—common, goblin; local history—Daggerdale; reading/writing; riding-horse, Religion—Faerûn.

**Appearance:** Holly is a pretty sixteen-year-old human girl. She has dark brown skin, bushy brown hair she wears fairly short, and dark brown eyes that sparkle with the joy of life. She has a tall, sturdy frame and a muscular build. When operating as one of Randal Morn's operatives, she disguises herself as a shepherdess in a long skirt and simple tunic woven from brown wool. If there is potential for battle, she will wear full plate armor inlaid with the red and yellow sun pattern of Lathander on the breastplate. When relaxing, she prefers bright yellow or red clothing. Her favorite outfit is a silk blouse embroidered with the scarlet and gold peacock pattern common to Lathander's priests.

**Background:** Holly's father was a faris (a holy warrior) from Zakhara and her mother a farmer from Daggerdale. Holly's father taught her a strong respect for justice and law, and told wonderful tales of the holy and just knights of his distant homeland, dedicated to his god, Hajama the Courageous. Both Holly's mother and father were supporters of Randal Morn's rebellion against the occupying forces of Zhentil Keep, which controlled the dale under a puppet ruler. Holly accompanied her father on raids and helped her mother patch the wounds of others from those raids, so that the young woman learned early in life both the martial and healing arts.

At fifteen Holly joined the Order of the Aster, a fellowship of knights dedicated to Lathander's church, which held similar beliefs to Hajama's. Shortly thereafter, she journeyed to Shadowdale to receive religious training at the temple of Lathander. While Holly was in Shadowdale, Holly's parents, uncle and grandmother were killed in an orc raid on their Daggerdale farm. The orcs had been equipped and supported by agents of Zhentil Keep. Holly was given leave to aid Lord Randal Morn in his rebellion against the Zhentilar and served the Rebel Lord as a messenger, warrior, and spy. She proved extremely capable in the last, due to her youth and innocent appearance.

During the rebellion against the Zhentilar, Holly was chosen by Lathander to prevent the resurrection of the evil god Bane, and she joined Joel to reach that end. Joel often compares the paladin's relationship to Lathander with his own relationship to Finder.

**Equipment:** Zakharan *scimitar +1* (the scimitar may cast a *light* spell in the outer planes), hand crossbow, dagger.

**Magical Items:** *Plate mail +2* (a gift from Lathander).

**Role-Playing Notes:** Holly is a friendly young woman, willing to help those in need. However, she puts her duty and dedication to Lathander before all else. Gifted with the paladin's ability of determining the alignment and intentions of others, she is wise enough to have learned by sixteen that distinguishing between good and evil is not as simple as telling black from white.

Growing up in Daggerdale, under occupation of an enemy force, has heightened her reactions and intuition, such that she is prepared to leap into battle at the drop of a helmet and equally prepared to lay low and wait for best moment to strike. Holly is proud of her Daggerdale heritage and knows a good deal about the region from her family and her service to the Rebel Lord. She has some second-hand knowledge of Zakhara from her father. Years of living in the dangers of Daggerdale have made it difficult for Holly to refrain from using her ability to sense evil, which causes her splitting headaches and nausea when she is trapped in the presence of evil beings. She trusts her friends completely and believes that once her word is given, it should not be broken.

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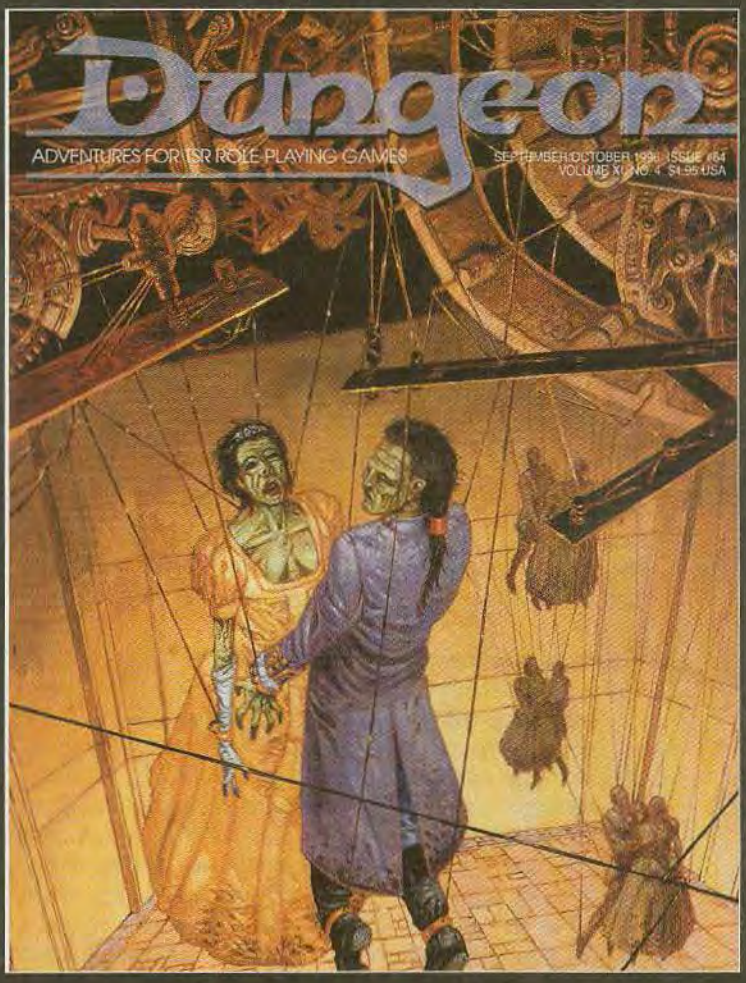


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# Dungeon®

ADVENTURES FOR TSR ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

DRAGON ANNUAL 1997
BONUS MODULE

# DRAGONWYR

BY CHRISTOPHER PERKINS

## Wyrmspotting

Artwork by Terry Dykstra
Cartography by Diesel

*Chris Perkins has "graduated" from regular* DUNGEON® Adventures *contributor to become its editor. It is not true that the publisher insisted he shave his head for the job.*

"Dragonwyr" is an AD&D® game adventure designed for four or more PCs of levels 7–10 (about 45–50 total levels). This module can be played as a stand-alone adventure or as the sequel to "Wyrmsmere," which appeared in *DRAGON® Magazine Annual #1.* The predominantly good-aligned party should include a full range of character classes, although a druid or ranger would prove especially beneficial.

"Dragonwyr" begins in the fortified town of Neriendor, a locale familiar to those who completed "Wyrmsmere." The PCs are hired by Aryzon Silvercloud (a procurer of adventurers' gear) to ascertain the fate of the green dragon Toxin. Neriendor's "green nemesis" has not been sighted for many months, and Aryzon wants information on Toxin's whereabouts and present activities. The PCs should search for signs of the green dragon in the woods west of Neriendor, taking with them Aryzon's *crystal claw*—a magical item capable of detecting evil dragons within a one-mile radius. Equipped with *potions of green dragon control* (provided by Aryzon), the PCs must venture to Toxin's lair and use the *potions* to coerce Toxin into revealing her true intentions. If they are successful, the PCs learn that Toxin has stolen a pair of red dragon eggs and plans to smuggle them into Neriendor unnoticed. Once the eggs are carefully stashed, Toxin intends to inform the dragon parents of the eggs' location and let the red drakes raze the town of Neriendor with their fiery breath.

### For the Players

On the edge of the frontier lies the fortified town of Neriendor, its palisades a bastion against the harsh monsters and cold tyranny of winter. Outside, the wind rips through your heavy clothing, diminishing to a breeze as you pass through the gates. Within the town walls, your only reminders of the cruel weather are the heaps of snow upon the rooftops and the downy flakes falling from the gray sky.

Cold and hungry, you find respite at a familiar inn. The next day, with full stomachs and dry boots, you visit Aryzon Silvercloud's adventuring shop. The half-elven proprietor greets you warmly, although his silver hair and piercing blue eyes are further reminders of the chill winter season. The message you received at the inn the night before was clear: Aryzon needs brave heroes to complete a perilous quest, and you're the best candidates in town.

## For the DM

Aryzon Silvercloud is a benevolent procurer of adventurers' gear and a veritable fountain of local lore. No one in Neriendor knows that Aryzon is the offspring of a silver dragon male and a cloud dragon female. He mingles with the humans and demihumans of Neriendor in the guise of a middle-aged half-elf, secretly guarding the town against evil. For complete information on Aryzon's background, the DM is referred to "Wyrmsmere" in *DRAGON Magazine Annual #1.*

**Aryzon Silvercloud** (mature adult silver/cloud dragon): INT genius (18); AL LN; AC –5; MV 9, fly 36 (C), jump 3; HD 17; hp 102; THAC0 4; #AT 3 + special; Dmg 1d10+7/1d10+7/3d12+7; SA breathe ice blast (140' × 30' × 30'; 8d6+14 hp damage) or paralytic cloud (50' × 40' × 20'; paralysis lasts 1d8+7 rounds), tail slap, wing buffet, kick, cast spells; SD assume cloud form (AC –8; MV fly 12 (A); MR 50%), immune to cold, cast spells; MR 35%; SZ G (82' long, 36' tail); ML 17; XP 22,000; *MM*/79 (dragon, silver), *MM*/81 (dragon, cloud).

**Spells** (cast at 9th-level): *color spray, comprehend languages; know alignment, mirror image; clairvoyance, protection from normal missiles.*

**Dragon abilities:** *call lightning* (twice/day), *control winds* (3 times/day), *create water* (twice/day), *control weather* (once/day), *feather fall* (twice/day), *obscurement* (3 times/day), *polymorph self* (3 times/day), *solid fog* (twice/day), *stinking cloud* (twice/day), *wall of fog* (once/day).

Aryzon and the green dragon Toxin are bitter adversaries. In fact, Aryzon's presence in Neriendor is the only thing that keeps Toxin from troubling the local townsfolk. Over the years, the green dragon has learned to give Silvercloud a wide berth. Toxin's caution has not prevented her from concocting schemes to terrorize the fortified town, but Aryzon seldom affords his verdant foe the opportunity to act on her sinister ambitions. Aryzon routinely sends well-armed groups of adventurers into Toxin's woodland "domain" to thwart her evil machinations and keep the green dragon distracted. This effort has helped preserve the peace in Neriendor, despite Toxin's unyielding presence in the nearby woods. Aryzon himself remains in the town to ensure that Toxin makes no blatant advances.

For the last several months, Toxin has been preoccupied with her latest scheme. She has been waiting for the right moment to steal two red dragon eggs from the mountaintop lair of Flamerule and Ashfyre, two reclusive red dragons who recently moved to the mountain range west of Neriendor. Once she has the red dragon eggs in her clutches, the conniving and secretive Toxin plans to smuggle them into Neriendor, then tip off the red dragons to the eggs' location. To deliver the eggs, Toxin has called upon her were-boar henchmen. These evil minions have visited Neriendor before in human guises and know where to stash the eggs so they'll not be seen by locals. Toxin knows that red dragons have fiery tempers, and she believes they will destroy Neriendor whether their eggs are returned safely or not. Aryzon will be forced to defend the town, leaving him weakened or dead by the time Toxin finally swoops in to plunder Neriendor's food and wealth.

Aryzon is not aware of Toxin's most recent scheme, but he is concerned by recent reports. The arrival of the red dragons presents a new threat, while the green dragon sightings have dropped measurably, leading Aryzon to suspect that trouble may be brewing. One possibility is that Toxin, feeling threatened by the red dragons' arrival or weary of the brutal winter, fled to a safer and warmer clime. Given Toxin's territorial nature, Aryzon doubts this is the case and suspects she's plotting something nefarious. For this reason, he plans to send skilled adventurers into the green dragon's territory to uncover her latest scheme.

If the heroes successfully completed "Wyrmsmere," they might have some useful items in their possession. The first is Aryzon's *crystal claw* (see sidebar) given to the characters by the dragon himself. The other items are three potions of *green dragon control* recovered by the stalwart heroes during the "Wyrmsmere" mission. In all likelihood, the potions were returned to

### New Magical Items

#### Aryzon's Crystal Claw

This delicate charm looks like a small, 4"-long dragon's claw carved from a chunk of transparent, multi-faceted quartz crystal. Attached to the claw is a thin platinum necklace (worth 250 gp). The claw bestows upon its possessor the following abilities:

❖ Detect chromatic dragons within a one-mile radius. The claw turns color to correspond to the closest dragon within range (white, red, black, green or blue).

❖ Affords +4 to saves vs. dragon breath (including breath weapons from firedrakes, ice lizards, and other dragonettes).

❖ Affords 5% magic resistance. This protection is cumulative with other devices such as *rings of magic resistance* or *robes of the archmagi.*

❖ Endows the wearer with the following spell-like abilities, each usable once/day: *change self, dig, ESP, fear, infravision, levitate, magic missile, tongues, water breathing.* All spells are cast at 6th level.

**XP Value:** 8,000 **GP Value:** 24,000

#### Basilisk Ring

The ring is engraved with a basilisk eye symbol, hence the name. It allows its wearer to become an inanimate statue at will. In this state, the wearer retains his senses but cannot move. The effect lasts for as long as the ring user desires, but this power cannot be exercised more than three times/day. Any spells cast upon the user are "preserved" while in statue form; thus, a *haste* spell cast before the ring's activation would still be in place during and after the ring wearer reverts to flesh, for the full duration of the spell.

The ring cannot be used to turn someone else to stone forcibly.

**XP Value:** 4,000 **GP Value:** 12,000

Aryzon at the conclusion of "Wyrmsmere," in which case Aryzon gives the party all three potions to use on Toxin. If the heroes are meeting Aryzon for the first time, he not only furnishes them with the potions but also lends them the *crystal claw*. If he cannot offer the *crystal claw* as a reward for their assistance, Aryzon asks the PCs to complete the quest "as a favor, for the good of the town." Whatever items they take from Toxin's hoard are theirs to keep.

The party's mission is to confront Toxin and use the potions of *green dragon control* to conduct a civil interrogation. Their goal is to uncover the dragon's latest scheme and, if possible, thwart it. Aryzon knows the location of Toxin's lair but cannot anticipate what perils the party will face en route. He relays the following pieces of information:

❖ Toxin is an old dragon, embittered by her repeated failure to plunder the town of Neriendor. She is otherwise reclusive, plotting ways to increase her wealth and the size of her dominion.

❖ Toxin's left eye is blinded by a cataract, but she is otherwise hale. She has a wizard's spellcasting ability, speaks several languages fluently, and often feigns injury to give her enemies a false sense of security.

❖ The green dragon lives in the ruins of Archaques Monastery, hidden in the woods west of Neriendor. The benevolent monks who once occupied the monastery were devoured by the dragon over 10 years ago. Huntsmen living outside Neriendor's walls refer to the ruins as Dragonwyr—a name Toxin has since adopted herself.

❖ Toxin has enslaved a number of woodland monsters, many of which guard her lair against intrusion. The dragon has few (if any) trusted servitors, but she occasionally "honors" a loyal henchman by choosing him as her familiar. The dragon is able to spy on her other minions through this one familiar's eyes.

❖ Over the years, Aryzon has sent other parties to spy on Toxin. Some of these groups perished, lured by the dragon's hoard and forced into direct conflict with Toxin herself. Those who've survived have observed Toxin's duplicitous and treacherous nature in the way she treats her minions and tortures her captives.

❖ Toxin has been known to use several magical items from her hoard, among these a small collection of *ioun stones* and magical rings.

## In Search of Toxin

> You leave Neriendor the day after meeting with Aryzon. Your food and equipment are replenished, and once again you step out into the cold. Winter's icy touch greets you as you walk through the town gates and set forth in search of Toxin. The hunters' path that leads to the western woods is buried beneath great drifts of snow. The trees that mark the forest's edge lurch under the weight of the ice clinging fiercely to their boughs. Tromping through the bleak landscape, you find yourselves searching for cover against the harsh wind and blowing snow.
>
> The day fades to dusk, and the cold turns colder still as stars appear in the darkening sky. Huddling around a crackling campfire, you plot your course through the woods toward the fallen Archaques Monastery, known to locals as Dragonwyr. The fiercest of enemies awaits you there, biding time in the icy cold. A shivering half-sleep encroaches, followed by a brief morning's respite before you press onward through winter's bitter wrath.

The journey to Toxin's lair is indeed frought with peril. The trip to Dragonwyr takes three days and two nights on foot through unfamiliar and unrelenting terrain. There are two planned encounters on the second day, detailed in the "Fur Trappers" and "Ice Cold Killers" sections below. If the PCs choose to fly to Dragonwyr via magic, ignore these two encounters. However, such expediency only deprives the PCs of a golden opportunity to put a serious crimp in Toxin's plans ...

## Fur Trappers

This encounter occurs during the morning of the second day. The only indication of danger is Aryzon's *crystal claw*, which suddenly turns a bright ruby red. (If the claw has been packed away, this important clue may go unnoticed.) The change in the claw's color suggests the presence of a red dragon within one mile. This alarm might be cause for great concern and have the characters looking skyward for trouble.

Roughly 20 minutes after Aryzon's claw changes color, the characters are met by four burly trappers heading back to Neriendor with a sled full of animal furs and pelts. The trappers do not impose on the party in any way; they only want to get their goods back to Neriendor as quickly as possible.

> Through the blowing snow you see four figures approaching. They look human, but it's hard to tell at this distance. It's also clear that they are dragging something large and cumbersome behind them. As they draw closer, you see that they are indeed humans. The four men are burly and strong, clothed in animal hides. They pull a makeshift sled heavily piled with animal furs and pelts. The bearded furriers have spears slung over their backs and moose horns tied to their belts. They grunt at you in passing—a greeting, but not a particularly cheerful one.

The furriers are actually wereboars heading east to Neriendor. Buried under the heavy pile of furs and pelts are two 3'-diameter eggs of burnt russet hue (red dragon eggs). If the characters signal them to stop, the furriers groan with exhaustion and comply. They let their ropes slacken and stare at the party with weary eyes. If questioned, the furrier named Neldryd says, "We're headin' to Neriendor to sell our goods, friend. Three weeks in the cold, and all we got to show fer it are these mangy furs!"

With a hungry grin, the furrier named Feryk adds, "All I can think of is gettin' back to Neriendor and stickin' my feet in a hot fire!" to which the other furriers laugh sullenly. If the characters ask the furriers for information, the wereboars can verify that the party is headed in the right direction, that Dragonwyr is an old ruin occupied by a "real nasty" green dragon and her "bugbear minions," and that red dragons have been seen flying over the distant mountains. "Bloody fire lizards!" grunts Neldrys. "Could use some of their flamin' breath right now, I tell ya." This is followed by more weary laughter as the furriers continue on their way.

The wereboars become belligerant if the PCs tamper with their furs. If the characters discover the eggs, Neldryd says, "Those are giant eagle eggs, friend. Worth a fair coin in Neriendor if

we get 'em there in one piece." They attack characters outright if the true nature of the eggs is revealed. (The unhatched red dragons are the cause of the *crystal claw*'s color change. There are no other red dragons in the area.)

Ideally, the characters should not be too concerned about the furriers or their sled. The DM should play the furriers as benign huntsmen returning from a long and difficult foray. The party will have another encounter with the wereboars later. If combat does erupt, the DM should pull no punches. The adventure can proceed even if the wereboars are defeated here, although the characters may be saddled with a pair of red dragon eggs that must be kept relatively warm.

**Wereboars** (4): INT average (9); AL N(E); AC 4; MV 12; HD 5+2; hp 37, 34, 32, 31; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2d6 or by weapon type +2 (Strength 18 bonus); SA lycanthropy; SD silver or magical weapons to hit; SZ M; ML 13; XP 650; *MM*/235 (lycanthrope); spear. Their names are Neldryd, Feryk, Grendyl and Sterrym, and they carry nothing of value.

## Ice Cold Killers

In late afternoon on the second day, the characters crest an icy snowdrift only to see three winter wolves tearing into the warm flesh of a snowy elk. The wolves, angered by the disturbance, attack at once.

The winter wolves are controlled by an evil voadkyn—an 8'-tall giant wearing thick animal furs and a pair of fierce bull horns. The giant-kin has left the wolves to feed but returns at the first hint of trouble, appearing three rounds after the wolves attack the PCs. The voadkyn is non-communicative, allowing his wolves to continue fighting while he creeps forward (using his white skins for camouflage) and moves within arrow range. The voadkyn is armed with a large *long bow +2* that fires three magical ice missiles per round (1d8+1 hp damage each). Treat these as *magic missiles* with regards to *brooches of shielding*, *shield* spells and other magical defenses. The bow is too large and awkward to be wielded effectively by human-sized characters. In melee combat, the voadkyn wields a huge club, but his preferred method of attack is with his bow. His aim is unhampered by foliage and wind. The voadkyn wears a *ring of fire resistance* given to him (as a token gift) by the green dragon Toxin. The ring is cursed and cannot be removed until the wearer is slain or a *remove curse* is cast upon it. In addition to its normal powers, the ring imposes a –4 penalty on all saving throws vs. enchantment/charm magic.

If the winter wolves are slain, the voadkyn attempts to flee, charging headlong through the snow if necessary to elude pursuers. The voadkyn knows the woods well, using the naturally blowing snow the same way a priest uses an *obscurement* spell. His movement rate remains 12 regardless of the wintry conditions; characters who attempt to follow him through the drifts and blowing snow suffer a 3-point movement rate penalty. The giant, though allied with Toxin, rarely reports to the dragon directly, fearing her wrath.

The encounter seems to end when the voadkyn and his wolves are defeated. (If the PCs are beaten, the adventure is probably over.) However, the blood and

the carcasses of the dead are enough to attract the attention of two giant eagles circling innocuously overhead. As the characters gather their gear and their injured, the eagles descend and attack. The attack is meant to scatter and frighten away the survivors, allowing the eagles to feed on the dead and injured. The giant eagles are tenacious and aggressive, refusing to flee until reduced to 50% of their hit points.

**Voadkyn:** INT high (13); AL NE; AC 5; MV 12; HD 7+7; hp 49; THAC0 13 (11 with *long bow +2*); #AT 1 or 3; Dmg 2d6+3 (club) or 1d8+1/1d8+1/ 1d8+1 (ice missiles); SA –4 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls; SD camouflage (90% invisible in natural habitat); resistant to fire (granted by ring); MR 90% resistant to *sleep* and *charm* spells; SZ L; ML 12; XP 1,400; *MM*/148; *long bow of ice missiles +2,* large club, cursed *ring of fire resistance,* pouch containing three 500-gp gems.

**Winter wolves** (3): INT average (8); AL NE; AC 5; MV 18; HD 6; hp 45, 40, 34; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4; SA frost breath (6d4 hp damage to all within 10'; usable once/turn); SD immune to normal cold; SZ L; ML 13; XP 975; *MM*/362 (wolf).

**Giant eagles** (2): INT semi- (3); AL N; AC 7; MV 6, fly 48 (D); HD 4; hp 22, 20; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1d6/1d6/ 2d6; SA dive attack (+4 to hit, inflict double damage with talons); SD cannot be surprised; SZ L; ML 13; XP 420; *MM*/27 (bird).

## Archaques Monastery

As the PCs near the monastery, Aryzon's *crystal claw* changes from transparent to vibrant emerald green, signifying the presence of a green dragon within one mile. Attempts to pinpoint the dragon's location using magic are thwarted by Toxin's persistent *non-detection* ioun stone that renders her undetectable by means of *clairaudience, clairvoyance, locate object* and *ESP* spells, *crystal balls,* and other detection magic. When the characters finally reach the ruined monastery (the morning of the third day), the DM should read or paraphrase the following:

> The light of dawn brings little warmth as you trudge to the edge of a steep ravine. Beyond this gully, through the snow-covered trees, you see the dark, ice-glazed ruins of Archaques Monastery, its crumbling walls half-buried in the deep white snow. Through the foliage you can barely discern the buttresses of a large edifice and smaller structures in poor repair. Perched atop the solemn cathedral are several hideous gargoyles with icicles hanging from their hooked noses. These small, stone sculptures stare blindly toward the blanketed forest—grim, lingering reminders of the monastery's forlorn nature. Within the grounds, you see no sign of movement except steady gusts of blowing snow.

Some areas of the monastery lie in ruin. What remains are the monks' dormitories (vacant), the old library (used as shelter by Toxin's bugbear and ogre magi minions), and the cathedral, in which the dragon herself lairs.

The cold weather coupled with Toxin's old age has made her listless and sleepy. However, that is not why she hasn't been seen flying over the woods west of Neriendor. Ever since the red dragons appeared in the mountains, Toxin has been lying low, taking great pains to ensure that the reds know nothing of her presence. Although Toxin is fairly certain that she could destroy both red dragons, she needs them alive—for now. By stealing two of their precious dragon eggs and placing them in within Neriendor's walls, Toxin hopes the red dragons will set the town ablaze in their rage, leaving the town ripe for conquest.

Toxin's plan is half-fulfilled. Two days before the PCs arrived, Toxin used a *monster summoning III* spell (cast from a scroll) to conjure three tasty hippogriffs and used them to lure the hungry red dragons away while she snatched two dragon eggs under the veil of an *invisibility* spell. With the eggs in her clutches, Toxin then returned to the monastery and handed them over to her wereboar henchmen. Accustomed to the harsh climate, the wereboars bundled up the eggs in thick pelts, placed them on a makeshift sled, and headed off to Neriendor in the guise of fur trappers. The PCs encountered these so-called trappers earlier in the adventure.

Toxin is waiting for the wereboars to reach Neriendor. Once she has afforded them ample time to reach the town, Toxin plans to send a messenger (Scarra the abishai) to inform the red dragons of the eggs' location. Toxin knows of the abishai's immunity to fire, making it the ideal choice as herald. The PCs have a full day before Toxin sets the last phase of her scheme in motion, which means they can still save Neriendor from destruction if they stop Toxin from alerting the red dragons.

### The Abbey (Areas 1–4)

The bugbears and ogre magi living in the old library (areas **3–4**) have pledged their allegiance to the green dragon in exchange for plunder and, of course, their lives. The humanoids are wary creatures who respond quickly to any sign of trouble. If intruders are detected anywhere within the compound, the humanoids quickly hunt down the interlopers. Toxin's familiar, Ghalraug, is also the bugbear leader, and through his eyes she can watch the battle unfold.

If Toxin is slain, the humanoids pillage what they can from the monastery before fleeing into the woods. They fight characters for custody of the dragon's hoard until they are outnumbered, at which point they flee. The ogre magi are particularly cowardly, retreating if reduced to 50% of their hit points. The bugbears would sooner fight to the death than surrender, even when greatly outmatched. The dragon herself, her wits dulled by the cold, spends most of her day resting in the cathedral (area **11**). If her familiar is slain, Toxin suffers 2d10 hp damage. She remains in her lair, eager to meet her familiar's slayer.

Due to the blowing and drifting snow, melee and missile combat is severely impaired outdoors. The DM may impose a –2 penalty on all attack rolls made by the characters, as well as a 3-point penalty to movement. The bugbears and ogres have adapted to the blistering cold and deep snow and suffer no such penalties.

**1. Courtyard.** Characters who wander across the snow-covered courtyard without the aid of invisibility magic or camouflage are spotted by the bugbears peering through the library windows (area **4**). The bugbears alert the other humanoids in areas **3–4.** Three rounds after the intrusion is detected, 2d6+13 bugbears and all three ogre magi emerge from the library to confront and annihilate the intruders.

**2A. Ruins.** These areas of the compound has collapsed into nothing more

than heaps of rubble buried under mounds of snow. There is nothing of value within these ruins. However, the ruins provide light cover (–2 AC bonus) against missile attacks.

**2B. Ruined Buildings.** Years of neglect coupled with the weight of the snow have caused the wooden ceilings of these buildings to collapse, filling each chamber with timber and masonry. There is nothing hidden or valuable under the debris.

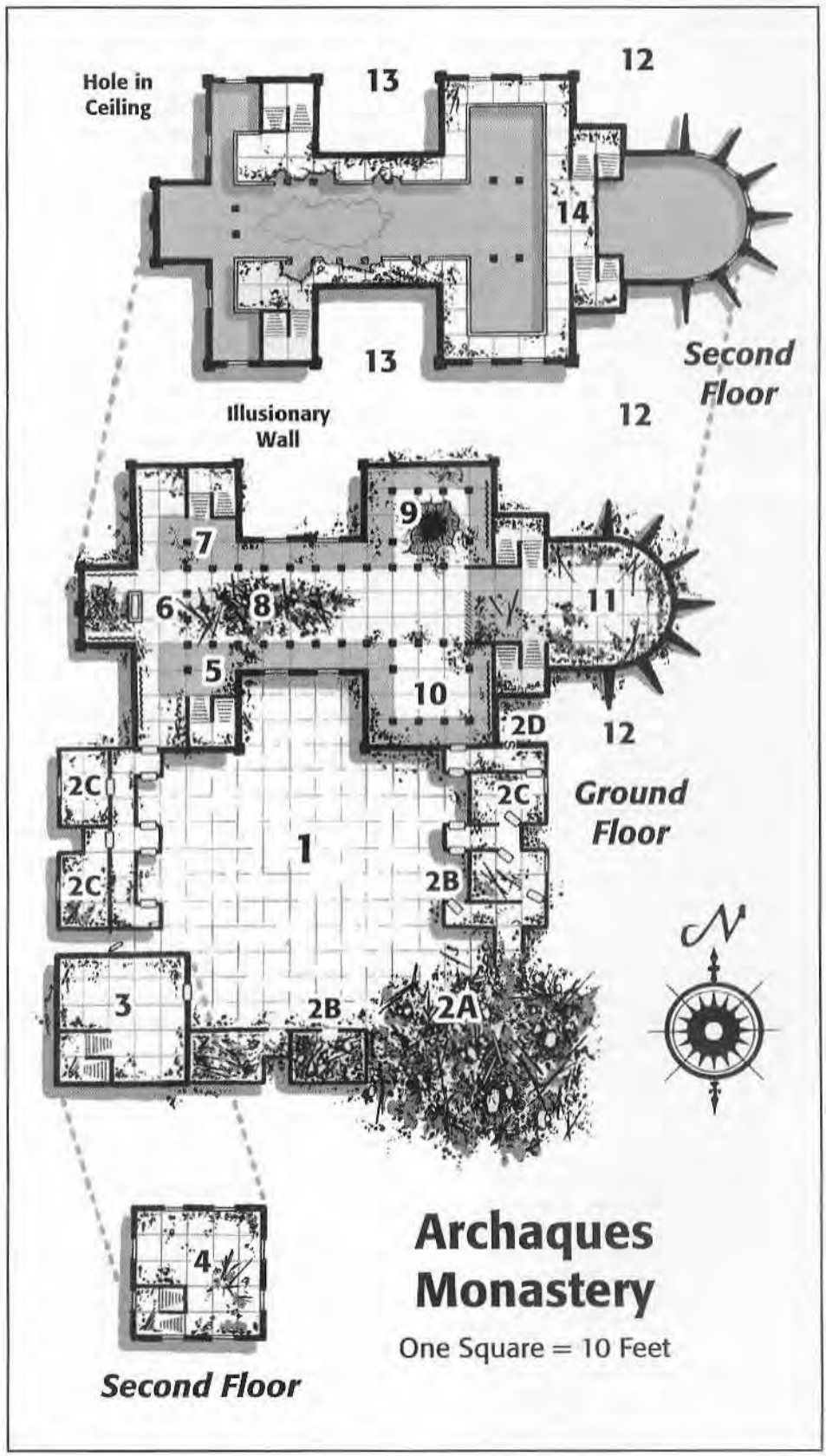
**2C. Monk Dormitories.** These chambers were set aside for the monks who once occupied Archaques. Now these rooms are empty. The simple cots that once served the monks were taken by the bugbears and placed in areas **3** and **4.**

**2D. Secret Door.** This secret portal was built in the event the monks needed to escape the monastery undetected. The door leads to the outside, in a corner behind the Archaques cathedral. The door is frozen shut and requires a successful Strength check at –4 to push open. The secret door may be detected normally (although neither the dragon nor her minions have detected it yet).

**3. Library, Main Floor.** The door on the ground floor is made of heavy oak and barred from the inside. It can withstand 50 hp damage before sundering. Characters who pound on the door invite the wrath of the occupants on both floors. Four bugbears armed with heavy crossbows remain inside the room at all times, their weapons trained on the door, ready to fire at intruders.

The chamber's walls are lined with thick wooden shelves that rise from floor to ceiling. Many of the shelves have been smashed and burned by the bugbears. Most of the original furniture (tables, chairs and ladders) was also destroyed and fed to the fire. A pile of charred timber and animal bones dominates the middle of the floor, around which 15 plain cots have been placed. In one corner, a stone staircase ascends to the second floor (area 4).

There are normally 15 bugbears stationed here. Eleven of the bugbears, including the bugbear sergeant Ghalraug, exit the building to hunt down intruders. Four of the bugbears, as stated above, remain behind to guard the library entrance.



**Ghalraug** (bugbear sergeant): INT very (12); AL CE; AC 5 (chain mail); MV 12; F6; hp 57; THAC0 15 (12 with *two-handed sword +1*); #AT 3/2; Dmg 2d4+1 (claws), 1d10+4 (*two-handed sword +1*, strength & specialization bonuses), or by weapon type +11 (with potion); SA surprise, specialized with two-handed sword; S 17 (+1/+1); SZ L; ML 15; XP 650; *MM*/32; chain mail, *two-handed sword +1*, potion of *fire giant strength* (+11 damage bonus), pouch containing 160 gp.

**Bugbears** (14): INT very (11); AL CE; AC 5 (4 with shield); MV 12; HD 3+1; hp 18 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4 (claws) or by weapon type; SA surprise; SZ L; ML 13; XP 270; *MM*/32; wooden shield, battle axe, heavy crossbow, 2d6 heavy quarrels, pouch containing 1d100 gp.

**4. Library, Upper Floor.** The contents of this chamber are relatively intact, and the room itself is lighted by four lanterns suspended from the ceiling by brass chains. Against the walls are eight oak writing desks once used by the monastery's scribes, but all of the desks are presently empty and bare. Tattered tapestries hang between eight shattered windows (two per wall). The tapestries, though handsome in their day, are worthless.

This room is typically occupied by 10 bugbears and three ogre magi that have assumed bugbear form. The ogre magi killed the tribal leader of the bugbears and usurped his position; the bugbears are aware of the ogres' true nature but consider them worthy leaders. The ogre magi like to take the battle outside, where they are quite comfortable in the cold. They *fly* and render themselves *invisible,* then blast their foes with *cones of cold* before using their less devastating magic. They save their *suggestion* spells should they need to flee, coercing the PCs into letting them go.

Tucked under one desk is a wooden trunk containing treasure given to the ogre magi by the green dragon. The trunk has three locks and three keys, and each ogre mage carries one of the keys! The trunk is also trapped, for opening it without the proper keys releases a 120-cubic-foot cloud of chlorine gas that inflicts 4d6+4 hp damage (save vs. breath weapon for half damage). The gas is contained in a glass capsule strapped to the inside of the trunk's lid and cannot be disabled by a thief. The trunk contains the following items: a sack holding 1,446 gp, a potion of *extra healing,* a poison potion (save or die) with a *Nystul's magic aura* cast on it, a *wand of illumination* (56 charges), a *rod of security* (3 charges), a scroll of *protection from lycanthropes,* a magical scroll (*passwall* cast at 12th level) and a *wind fan.* Used to repel a green dragon's breath, the *wind fan* reduces damage from the breath weapon by half. Toxin did not consider this problem when she gave the "trinket" away.

**Ogre magi** (3): INT exceptional (16); AL LE; AC 4 or 2; MV 12, fly 18 (C); HD 5+2; hp 40, 36, 33; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10 or by weapon type; SA spell-like abilities; SD regenerate 1 hp/round; SZ L; ML 14; XP 975; *MM*/272 (ogre); *long sword +1,* pouch containing 1d6 gems (worth 1d10 × 100 gp each), key to trunk (one of three; see above). The ogre magi can cast the following spells (at 5th-level): *charm person* (once/day), *darkness 10' radius, fly* (for 12 turns), *invisibility* (at will), *polymorph self, sleep* (once/day). They can also assume *gaseous form* and cast *cone of cold* (8d8 hp damage) each once/day.

**Ogre mage #1** (Akorai) wears a *ring of protection +2,* lowering his AC to 2 and granting +2 on all saving throws. This ogre also wields a *wand of lightning* (19 charges) in battle.

**Ogre mage #2** (Shivilin) wears a *robe of scintillating colors,* a *ring of warmth,* and a *necklace of missiles* (two 5-HD and one 9-HD missile remaining).

**Ogre mage #3** (Tuala) carries a *javelin of piercing* and possesses an *ioun stone* (dark blue ellipsoid) that absorbs 60 hit points of *magic missile* damage before burning itself out.

**Bugbears** (10): AC 5 (4 with shield); hp 18 each; see area **3** for full statistics and equipment.

## The Cathedral (Areas 5–14)

The cathedral itself serves as Toxin's lair, and most of the dragon's humanoid minions are wise not to disturb their mistress during "sleeping hours" in the day.

The cathedral itself is cold and uninviting. The structure looks like it's crumbling under its own weight, although structurally there's no risk of utter collapse. The interior is filled with debris from collapsed pillars, balconies and sections of roof.

Characters may enter the cathedral by various means, but Toxin has prepared traps to snare the unwary. One of the more daring approaches involves descending through the 50' × 20' hole in the cathedral ceiling, directly above area **8.** The roof of the cathedral is covered with ice and snow, and only PCs with the mountaineering proficiency and proper climbing gear can scale or walk across it. Thieves may opt to use their Climb Walls ability instead. Either way, penalties for armor, encumbrance and surface conditions still apply. Magic provides a safer means of entry. *Fly, passwall,* and *dimension door* spells are particularly useful here.

Toxin does not discourage outsiders from entering her lair. She also expects regular reports from the ogre magi and bugbears living in the library. Thus, there are few natural or magical obstacles preventing the PCs from reaching her lair (area **11**). However, the cathedral is not without its traps and perils; it should be noted, however, that Toxin's minions are careful to avoid these known "danger zones."

**5. Southwest Annex.** The tiled cathedral floor is covered with debris and puddles of melted snow. Several of the tiles are chipped and cracked. A faded tapestry hanging on the western wall depicts three monks drinking from clay goblets. In its present condition, the tapestry is worthless.

Stairs lead up to the cathedral's stone balcony, supported by crumbling pillars 15' overhead (see area **13** for details).

The 20' × 30' section of floor at the base of the stairs is trapped with a *magic mouth* spell placed there by Toxin. The "mouth" forms on one of the nearby pillars and says with a draconic hiss, "Who dares violate my sanctuary?" The sound can be heard by Toxin in area **11.** See that area for details.

**6. Altar.** Positioned in this large alcove is an altar chiselled from a slab of white marble. Engraved upon the surface of the altar are the words "Melos tahn hanarrim." This ancient human language was crafted by the monks of Archaques Monastery, and this brief passage is the only surviving remnant of their creation. A *comprehend languages* spell provides the following translation: "Strength lies in brotherhood."

Characters who quietly inspect the alcove or the altar will not be spotted by Toxin in area **11.** The dragon has lost most of her vision in one eye, and the

shadows of the cathedral all but obscure her view of the west end. However, noises resonate easily in the cathedral, and the dragon's hearing is sharp. If she detects the PCs, she does not give away her presence until the intruders approach the illusory wall concealing her lair or until Toxin herself is detected.

The tapestries on the north and south walls are poorly maintained and plain. Growing on the back of the northern tapestry is a patch of brown mold that absorbs the heat of any warm-blooded creature approaching within 5' of it. A *ring of warmth* provides complete immunity from the attack. (The ogre mage Shivilin has such an item.)

**Brown mold:** INT non-; AL N; AC 9; MV 0; HD n/a; THAC0 n/a; #AT 0; Dmg special; SA absorb heat for 4d8 hp damage (per round); MR immune to all spells save *disintegrate,* plant-based magic and cold spells; SZ M (8' diameter); ML n/a; XP 15; *MM*/255 (mold).

**7. Northwest Annex.** This unlit corner of the cathedral appears uninhabited and contains nothing of discernable value. A tattered tapestry depicting a procession of monks hangs on the west wall, and a flight of stairs ascends to the cathedral's overhanging balcony (area **13**). The 20' × 30' area at the base of the stairs is trapped with a *magic mouth* spell identical to the one in area **5.**

**8. Rubble Heap.**

> Lying in the middle of the darkened cathedral is a tall mound of snow-covered debris–timber and slate tiles mainly. Snowflakes fall steadily through the gaping hole in the vaulted roof, adding their miniscule weight to the heap before you.

If Toxin has been alerted to the presence of intruders, she watches them closely through the illusory wall hiding her lair (area **11**). When the PCs approach within 10' of the rubble heap, the dragon uses this debris as raw material for the assembly of an earth elemental. The dragon conjures the elemental with the aid of *stone of controlling earth elementals.* There is enough stone among the debris to form the elemental fully. Hidden behind her illusory wall, the dragon silently orders the elemental to attack until destroyed or until the intruders are slain or driven away.

Every attack by the earth elemental that misses its intended target has a 15% chance of knocking down one of the cathedral's pillars. The collapse of two consecutive pillars is enough to trigger the collapse of a section of the overhead balcony (the section supported by the fallen pillars). Anyone standing underneath at the time of this collapse must make a Dexterity check or suffer 6d6 hp damage from falling stonework.

Scarra the abishai watches the PCs from area **14.** The baatezu is reluctant to confront a well-armed group of adventurers and has more pressing obligations to its mistress, Toxin. As Toxin's messenger, Scarra is more concerned with remaining out of sight. If the PCs are sufficiently distracted by the elemental, Scarra attempts to *gate* 1d3 green abishai (30% chance of success). Whether the *gate* opens or not, Scarra *teleports* to area **11.** If spotted, attacked or otherwise threatened, Scarra *teleports* to safety without attempting to open a *gate.* (See area **14** for details.)

**Earth elemental:** INT low (5); AL N; AC 2; MV 6; HD 12; hp 82; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 4d8 (–2 hp/die to flying creatures); SA structural damage; SD +2 or better weapons to hit; SZ L (12' tall); ML 16; XP 6,000; *MM*/99 (elemental).

**9. Northeast Annex.** The floor in this part of the cathedral has been gouged away, forming a circular earthen pit 20' in diameter and 20' deep. (The floor tiles and excavated rock were added to the "heap" in area **8.**) Toxin uses the pit to contain slaves, many of whom are brought to her by the ogre magi and bugbears. These slaves are usually *charmed* by the dragon, toyed with for a short while, and then snapped up and devoured. A few of these prisoners are handed over to Scarra (Toxin's green abishai ally) or the trapper in area **10.** Presently, there are no slaves in the pit. Characters who search the floor of the pit find a rusty dagger, a dead *wand of secret door and trap location,* and a *ring of idiocy* hidden in the dirt. The cursed ring was left here deliberately by Toxin. When worn, the ring reduces the wearer's Intelligence to 3. The effect persists until a *remove curse* spell is cast. Anyone struck dumb by the ring becomes an easy mark for the dragon's *charm person* spell (should she feel inclined to have someone polish her scales).

Hanging on the east wall of the annex is another tattered tapestry depicting a monk kneeling before a window with the sun shining down on him.

**10. Southeast Annex.** The 30' × 30' section of floor enclosed by the pillars is unusual in that its tiles are made of red and black flagstones arranged in a mosaic-like pattern. In the middle of the floor is a red stone protrusion roughly 1' × 1' × 1' easily mistaken for the base of a shattered pedestal.

The floor is actually a "tattooed" trapper brought here and fed by the dragon. The creature's musculature is particularly strong, allowing it to wrap itself quickly around its prey (–3 surprise penalty).

Hanging on the wall east of the trapper is a faded tapestry depicting the monastery in more glorious times.

**Trapper:** INT high (13); AL N; AC 3; MV 3; HD 12; hp 78; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 4 + victim's AC; SA suffocation (six rounds); SD immune to heat- and cold-based attacks; SZ H (30' × 30'); ML 11; XP 3,000; *MM*/229 (lurker).

**11. Dragon's Lair.** Attempts to spy on the dragon through windows or magical scrying are thwarted by Toxin's *invisibility* spell and her *nondetection ioun stone.* The huge archway that forms the entrance to Toxin's lair is also veiled by a *permanent illusion* of a 30' wall (cast from a scroll at 15th-level of ability). The spell completely obscures the archway, creating a surface carved with a decorative sun-like fresco.

When she detects intruders, Toxin first uses her *detect magic* spell to gauge the number of magical items in their possession. When PCs approach the wall, either to inspect it or search for secret doors, Toxin employs her *ESP* spell to glean the PCs' intentions. If she deems them a threat or learns that they have *Aryzon's crystal claw,* she breathes a cloud of chlorine gas encompassing the entire group. The dragon has the still calm of a statue up until the moment she strikes. If the illusory wall is detected and disbelieved, the PCs may have a round to quaff Aryzon's potions before the green dragon can strike. If the PCs are not cautious and the dragon sees the potions, she casts her *shatter* spell immediately, destroying all breakable containers in a 3' radius.

Scarra the abishai, lurking in area **14,** *teleports* to this chamber in the midst of the confrontation. The abishai roosts on a window ledge but avoids melee. Toxin has already informed the abishai of its task. When the order is given, Scarra flies through the

window (or *teleports* a safe distance) and heads toward the mountains to inform the red dragons of the whereabouts of their stolen dragon eggs.

If the PCs call a truce, Toxin speaks to them only if she has not been injured and only if they relinquish Aryzon's *crystal claw* ("as a gift"). This item she prizes above anything else the PCs could offer. If necessary, she uses her *suggestion* spell to coerce a PC into surrendering the item. Toxin wants the *claw* for added protection, just in case the red dragons pose a threat to her.

If she succumbs to the power of the *potions of dragon control,* Toxin can be coerced into revealing her scheme as well as her intention to send Scarra the abishai to the red dragons living in the mountains. Since the abishai is instrumental to her plan, Toxin will not invite the baatezu to attack the PCs. Once she regains her free will, Toxin orders the abishai to *teleport* to the mountains and lure the red dragons to Neriendor with news concerning their stolen eggs. Unless the PCs act decisively, the abishai will probably escape, leaving the PCs with little option but to travel back to Neriendor and track down Toxin's wereboar henchmen. If the PCs defeated the wereboars en route to Toxin's lair, and they mention this fact to Toxin, the green dragon commands the abishai to lure the red dragons to Neriendor anyway. If Scarra is also slain, Toxin becomes truly outraged and attacks.

The *charm* ability of Aryzon's potions has the same limitations as the *charm monster* spell. Toxin cannot be coerced or tricked into injuring herself or attacking Scarra, and any promises she makes to spare Neriendor from the red dragons' wrath lasts only as long as the potion's effect. If reduced to 50 hit points, Toxin knocks out the nearest wall with the snap of her tail and (one round later) flies off to recuperate.

The room itself is unfurnished, giving the dragon room to move and stretch her wings. Toxin is careful not to hide her wealth here; too many creatures know Dragonwyr's location. However, she does keep 10 locked trunks (3' × 2' × 2') spaced around the outer wall, nine of which contain 5,000 cp. The tenth holds 182 gems (1 gp each), 76 pieces of fake jewelry (1 gp each) and a *necklace of strangulation.* Toxin destroyed the keys to these trunks, which she uses to test her minions' loyalty.

This 50' high sepulchre has but one lingering enchantment left behind by the monks of Archaques Monastery. No undead may enter this sanctified chamber; intelligent undead simply avoid the area, while mindless undead collapse into heaps of flesh and bone when entering the area.

**Toxin** (very old female green dragon): INT exceptional (15); AL LE; AC –5; MV 9, fly 30 (C); HD 18; hp 103; THAC0 3; #AT 3+special; Dmg 1d8+9/ 1d8+9/ 2d10+9; SA breath weapon (50' × 40' × 30' cloud; 18d6+9 hp damage); tail slap (2d8+9 hp damage; save vs. petrification or be stunned for 1d4+1 rounds); wing buffet (1d8+9 hp damage; make a Dexterity check or be knocked prone); SD regenerate 1 hp/turn (granted by ring), *ioun stones* (see below); MR 40%; SZ G (80' body, 72' tail); ML 15; XP 18,000; *MM*/67.

**Natural abilities:** *entangle* (once/day), *plant growth* (once/day), *suggestion* (once/day), *warp wood* (3 times/day), *water breathing* (at will).

**Spells memorized** (cast at 15th level): *color spray, detect magic* (×2), *feather fall, magic missile, sleep, taunt, ventriloquism; ESP, invisibility* (already cast), *shatter, strength* (+1 to hit, +1 damage).

**Magical items:** *ring of regeneration* (piercing right ear), *ring of wizardry* (worn on left claw; doubles 1st- and 2nd-level spells), *stone of controlling earth elementals* (resembling a clear crystal; set into Toxin's *ring of wizardry*), *periapt of proof against poison* (embedded in fang), four *ioun stones* (noted below).

**Ioun stones:** red sphere (bestows *protection from fire,* as the third-level priest spell); pale green lozenge (affords *nondetection,* as the third-level wizard spell), black star (absorbs 62 hp of electrical damage), yellow spindle (+1 to saves vs. all forms of petrification).

**12. Staircases.** Both of these staircases connect Toxin's lair to the cathedral balcony (area **14**). Lurking in each stairwell are two wraiths (four total). These are the remains of high-level adventurers slain and devoured by Toxin who now serve the dragon unwillingly. The wraiths are unable to enter area **11** due to enchantments placed upon that sanctum by the monastery's original inhabitants, but they try to "torture" their slayer with their foul whisperings. However, Toxin simply ignores them.

**Wraiths** (4 total): INT very (12); AL LE; AC 4; MV 12, fly 24 (B); HD 5+3; hp 35, 32, 26, 25; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA energy drain; SD silver or magical weapons needed to hit; MR immune to *sleep, charm,* death and cold-based spells; SZ M; ML 15; XP 2,000; *MM*/365.

**13. Balcony.** This 15'-high balcony of sculpted stone is supported by massive stone pillars rising from the cathedral floor. Some of these pillars have fallen, weakening or causing sections of the balcony to crumble. The balcony is not in danger of further collapse unless additional pillars are knocked down (say, by the elemental in area **8**).

**14. Abishai's Perch.** This 20' × 30' section of balcony serves as Scarra's lair. The abishai wears a *basilisk ring,* an engraved brass band borrowed from Toxin. The ring allows its wearer to become an inanimate statue at will. In this state, the wearer retains his senses but cannot move. The effect lasts for as long as the ring user desires, but this power cannot be exercised more than three times/day. Any spells cast upon the user are "preserved" while in statue form; thus, a *haste* spell cast before the ring's activation would still be in place during and after the wearer reverts to flesh, for the full duration of the spell.

The abishai uses its *change self* spell to turn itself into a human monk, then employs the *ring* to transform itself into a statue. If attacked, it reverts to flesh and assumes its true form long enough to strike once and *teleport* to area **11.**

**Scarra** (green abishai): INT average (10); AL LE; AC 3; MV 9, fly 12 (C); HD 5+2; hp 37; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d4+1; SA poison (save or die), dive (+2 to hit for double damage); SD +1 or better weapons to hit; regenerate 1 hp/round; immune to fire and poison; half damage from cold and gas attacks; MR 30%; SZ L (7' tall); ML 8; XP 9,000; *PLANESCAPE® MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix* / 18 (baatezu, lesser).

Spell-like abilities (usable one at a time, once/round, at will): *advanced illusion, animate dead, change self, charm person, command, infravision, know alignment* (always active), *produce flame, pyrotechnics, scare, suggestion, teleport without error.*

## Leaving the Monastery

The objective of this encounter is not to destroy the green dragon but to

confront her and unveil her scheme. If Scarra the abishai escapes, the PCs will have difficulty finding the baatezu in time to thwart the last phase of Toxin's plan. Their only remaining option is to return to Neriendor and retrieve the stolen dragon eggs before the red dragons destroy the town.

Toxin will do everything she can to prevent the characters from returning to Neriendor. Aryzon's potions can be used to hold Toxin at bay until the PCs makes good their escape from Dragonwyr. If the PCs reduce Toxin to 50 hp or less, she withdraws and troubles them no further, fearing for her life.

If the PCs destroy the abishai in time, Toxin herself flies to the red dragons, risking herself to see her plans realized (and counting upon her magic items to protect her). Even if the PCs somehow manage to slay both the dragon and her messenger, the red dragons invariably come to Neriendor intent on finding their missing brood.

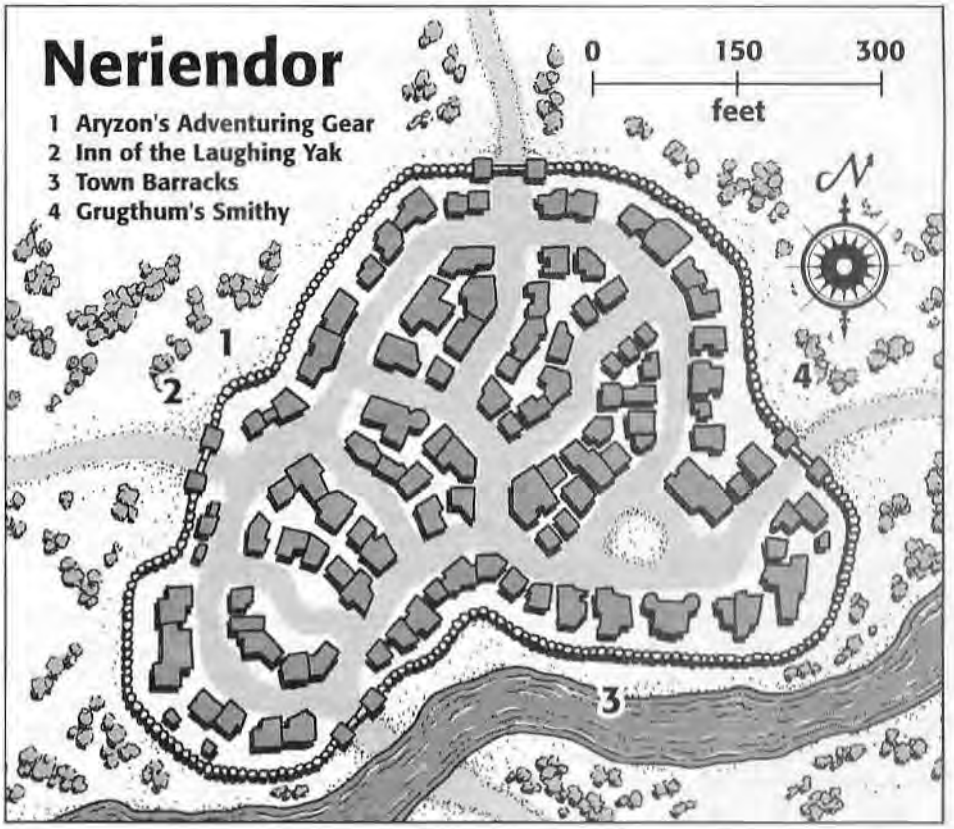
Whether or not the PCs need to return to Neriendor depends on whether the wereboars were successful in reaching the town with the stolen dragon eggs. If the characters defeated the wereboars earlier in the adventure (see "Fur Trappers"), the green dragon's plan hinges solely on whether or not her abishai is able to lure the red dragons to Neriendor.

The journey back to Neriendor should be less perilous than the trek to Dragonwyr. Those wishing to make the three-day journey more expedient may rely on flying or teleportative magic.

## Neriendor

If the PCs are forced to trudge back to Neriendor through the winter's snow, it takes them three full days from the time they leave the monastery until the time they reach Neriendor's gates–time enough for Toxin or her abishai to trick the red dragons Flamerule and Ashfyre into attacking the town. When the PCs arrive, the red dragons have already struck once, and entire blocks of Neriendor have been razed. Blackened timber, blowing ash and charred corpses are lingering reminders of the brutal assault. In this event, proceed with the "Fires of Wrath" section.

If the PCs reach Neriendor within one day's time after Toxin or her abishai escape to warn the red dragons, Neriendor is still untouched, and the




PCs have several hours to track down the wereboars and find the red dragon eggs. In this case, proceed with the "Egg Hunt" section.

### Fires of Wrath

Read the following if the red dragons have already attacked the town:

> You have arrived too late. A cold wind carries the smell of ash and smoke across the snow-blanketed path leading to the blackened gates of Neriendor. Much of the town remains intact, and surely the devastation should be greater. All seems quiet now, however, as you draw nearer.

The PCs have no trouble entering the scorched town. Among the destroyed buildings are Aryzon's shop, and any attempt to track down Aryzon is met with failure. His remains are not among the dead, and no one in town has seen him since the "fire dragons" attacked. If the PCs make further inquiries concerning the dragons, they learn the following:

❖ The "fire dragons" descended from the clouds, striking without warning. Within seconds, roofs were set ablaze and people were running for their lives.

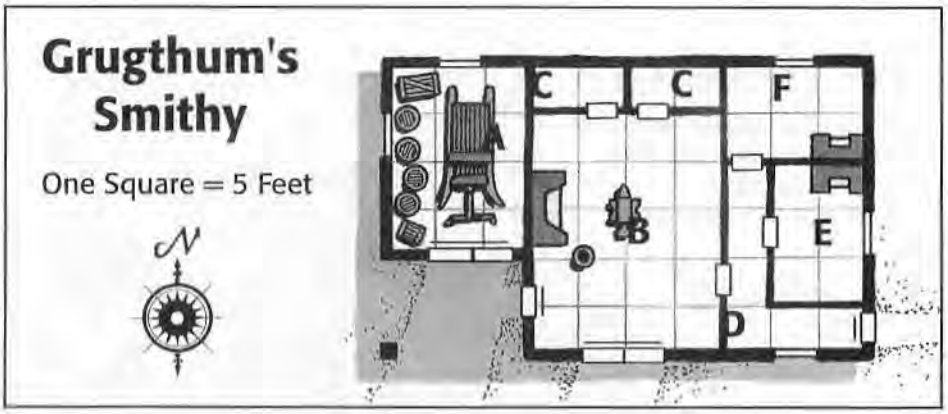
❖ The two fire dragons were driven off by a third dragon with scales of silvery-blue. This great drake (Aryzon Silvercloud) flew in out of nowhere and single-handedly drove away the larger of the fire-breathing dragons with the aid of its breath weapon (an icy blast of air). The other fire dragon seemed enraged by this and pursued. The dragons have not appeared since.

The DM should not draw attention to Aryzon's absence unless the PCs attempt to locate him. If the PCs ask about the four "fur trappers" (wereboars), they learn the following:

❖ The proprietor of the Inn of the Laughing Yak recalls that four surly trappers visited his establishment, eating and drinking themselves into a stupor. They left late that night, presumably to another place in town.

❖ A militia soldier assigned to the Night Watch recalls four drunken furriers stumbling toward the east end of town.

**Flamerule** and **Ashfyre** (adult red dragons): INT exceptional (15); AL CE; AC –5; MV 9, fly 30 (C); HD 17; hp 101, 91; THAC0 3; #AT 3+special; Dmg 1d10+6/1d10+6/3d10+6; SA breath weapon (90' long × 5' wide cone of fire;




12d10+6 hp damage); wing buffet; tail slap; kick; snatch; SD immune to fire; MR 35%; SZ G; ML 17; XP 15,000; *MM*/68.

Flamerule's spells and spell-like abilities (cast at 11th level): *affect normal fires* (3 times/day), *detect magic, heat metal, pyrotechnics* (3 times/day), *sleep, strength.*

Ashfyre's spells and spell-like abilities (cast at 11th level): *affect normal fires* (3 times/day), *feather fall, heat metal, locate object, magic missile, pyrotechnics* (3 times/day).

## Egg Hunt

If the characters return to Neriendor before the red dragons' attack, they can begin their search for the red dragon eggs (or make preparations to repel the impending dragon attack). The PCs will probably seek out Aryzon Silvercloud. Silvercloud suggests that the PCs complete one of two courses of action, depending on what they've managed to achieve so far: search Neriendor for the stolen dragon eggs (and the wereboars) or ready the town for an aerial assault. Aryzon will not accompany the PCs, just in case the red dragons appear and he's forced to assume his true form. (As a side note, Aryzon always turns invisible before becoming a dragon to keep his "cover.")

Using Aryzon's *crystal claw* to guide them, the PCs should have no trouble finding the red dragon eggs and their wereboar guardians (area **4** below). If they successfully retrieve the eggs and bring them back to Aryzon, proceed with the "Day of Dragons" section.

## Keyed Encounters (Areas 1–4)

**1. Aryzon's Adventuring Gear.** This is Aryzon's shop and a focal point in this adventure. Characters can purchase equipment here at standard *PHB* prices. The store and its contents are destroyed in "Fires of Wrath" if the PCs are unable to warn Aryzon in time.

**2. Inn of the Laughing Yak.** This is a the largest and most reputable inn in town. The proprietor, Valstaf Dyarrik (0-level human), is a generous and well-respected man. He has a special fondness for music and often lets the talented Aryzon "warm the inn" with his zither playing.

**3. Town Barracks.** This stone building houses the town militia. Before the red dragons' attack (see "Fires of Wrath"), the militia numbers 60 men. After the attack, this number is reduced to 47. All militia men are 1st-level fighters with limited combat experience. The Captain of the Guard, Avatus Dyarrik (Valstaf's brother), is a 5th-level fighter with a grim seriousness about him.

**4. Wereboars' Lair.** This sturdy stone building is one of Neriendor's many smithies. Jutting out from the front of the building is an iron-wrought sign reading "Grugthum's Metalworks." The blacksmith, Grugthum, is dwarven. He is also Toxin's willing spy in Neriendor, hiding his wicked intentions behind a gruff and stolid veneer.

All of the doors leading into the smithy are barred shut from the inside. A barred door can be opened by force (by inflicting 45 hp damage to the door) or by magical means (such as a *knock* spell). Characters can also find ways to enter the smithy using magic (*wraithform, passwall,* and *dimension door* spells are but a few options).

PCs who seek help from the local militia should realize that lycanthropes can only be harmed by silver and/or magical weapons. Since the militia is ill-equipped to fight the monsters, the PCs are pretty much on their own.

**4A. Storage Shed.** This room is cluttered with barrels of water, ropes, ladders, shovels, old suits of armor, and crates. Many of the crates contain horseshoes, iron spikes and similarly fashioned items.

Sitting in the middle of the room is the fur-laden sled belonging to the wereboar "furriers." Many of the furs have been discarded onto the dirt floor, suggesting that the dragon eggs were indeed hidden beneath them. The eggs have since been moved to area **4F.**

**4B. Smithy.** A blazing hearth dominates this uncomfortably warm, lamplit chamber. Positioned in front of the hearth are the blacksmith's bellows and anvil. A large mallet leans against the anvil, a barrel of cooling water rests nearby, and iron tools hang from hooks on every wall. Dangling amid the tools are three suits of plate mail armor (sized for humans), a suit of *splint mail +1* (sized for a human), and a suit of ring mail (sized for a dwarf). There are also four non-magical shields mounted above the hearth.

Grugthum the dwarf and the two most powerful wereboars (Neldryd and Feryk) are encountered here. Grugthum knows that harboring such dangerous creatures within Neriendor's walls is punishable by incarceration and makes no bones about slaying the party to guard his secrets and save his own hide.

**Grugthum** (8th-level dwarven fighter): AL NE; AC 1 (*chain mail +4*); MV 6; F8; hp 65; THAC0 13 (base); #AT 2; Dmg 1d8+8 (Strength bonus, specialization, *battle axe +3*); S 18/73 (+2/+3), D 9, C 15, I 13, W 11, Ch 7; SD +4 to saves vs. magic and poison; 60' infravision; ML 11; XP 2,000; *chain mail +4, battle axe +3,* key to iron strongbox in area **4F.**

**Wereboars** (2): INT average (9); AL N(E); AC 4; MV 12; HD 5+2; hp 37 (Neldryd), 34 (Feryk); THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2d6 or by weapon type +2 (Strength 18 bonus); SA lycanthropy; SD silver or magical weapons to hit; SZ M; ML 13; XP 650; *MM*/235 (lycanthrope); spear.

**4C. Storage.** These small rooms contain unworked rails of iron and other

metals used by Grugthum. Hanging on the walls are countless iron chains (from 5' to 50' long) fashioned by the dwarf. There is little else of interest here.

**4D. Hallway.** This L-shaped hall is unlit. Hanging from the ceiling by hooks are dozens of chains. The chains are each 10' long, hang mere inches above the floor, and spaced so close together that anyone walking down the hall can't help but create rattling noises. This "alarm system" devised by Grugthum alerts the wereboars in area **4F** when someone is drawing near. A *silence* spell effectively negates the noise.

**4E. Kitchen.** Grugthum is a poor cook, and his cleaning skills are even worse. This kitchen is filthy and unkept. Dirty dishes and crockery are strewn about haphazardly, and soot from the fireplace covers the floor.

**4F. Grugthum's Bedroom.** The dwarf's bedroom is furnished with an iron-framed cot suited to his broad dwarven stature. Next to the bed is a locked iron strongbox containing Grugthum's treasure (given to him by Toxin in exchange for his unyielding loyalty). The treasure consists of 259 pp and a polished 5,000-gp ruby. The dwarf considers this gem his most prized possession.

The room is occupied by the wereboars Grendyl and Sterrym in hybrid form. They attack the PCs on sight.

Placed in front of the blazing fireplace are the two red dragon eggs. The dwarf has instructed the wereboars to keep the fire stoked so the eggs stay warm. (The dwarf doesn't want the rightful owners of the eggs descending upon him with a vengeance because the unborn drakes perished of frostbite.) Once the wereboars are dispatched, the PCs may either remove the 175-lb. eggs or wait for the local militia to arrive.

**Wereboars** (2): hp 32 (Grendyl), 31 (Sterrym); see area **4B** for full statistics.

## Day of Dragons

This event allows the PCs to see the dragon Silvercloud for the first time. This encounter unfolds in one of two ways:

❖ If the PCs find the eggs before the red dragons reach Neriendor, the PCs may offer to take the eggs far away from Neriendor themselves or approach Aryzon for help. Realizing the importance of quick and decisive action,

Aryzon has the characters remove the eggs from Neriendor, giving him time to turn *invisible*, assume dragon form, and meet them in the open. Silvercloud, in his dragon form, then carries both eggs to Dragonwyr (Toxin's lair) and lures the red dragons there instead.

❖ If the red dragons have already attacked Neriendor once, Silvercloud returns after successfully driving away Flamerule and Ashfyre. The mighty Silvercloud descends into the ruined town to inform the people of Neriendor that the larger dragon Flamerule has been slain but warns that his mate may yet return. Silvercloud himself is injured, and PC clerics may offer to heal him. Once healed, Silvercloud agrees to take the eggs back to the mountains. This act spares Neriendor from Ashfyre's vengeance in the short term; for the moment, she lacks the courage to confront Flamerule's slayer again.

The DM should allow players to make their own suppositions regarding Aryzon the shopkeeper and Silvercloud the dragon. Aryzon does not wish to reveal his true nature to anyone and does his best to allay any suspicions.

The adventure ends with a sudden reprise. Assuming she wasn't slain at Dragonwyr, Toxin herself flies to Neriendor, hoping to plunder the razed town in the wake of the red dragons' terrifying assault. Toxin has no way of knowing whether the attack occurred without surveying Neriendor herself (and she's too impatient and expectant about the matter to send a messenger). Toxin naturally assumes that Silvercloud is still alive, but she's convinced the battle with the red dragons will have weakened him enough to leave the town vulnerable.

Toxin relies on her *ring of regeneration* to regain hit points lost in her earlier battle with the PCs. As long as she's above 50 hp, Toxin feels strong enough to oppose the town directly. If any of her ogre magi minions are still alive (see "Archaques Monastery" for details), they will be riding on Toxin's

back, serving as her reinforcements. Her preferred targets (in prioritized order) are Silvercloud, the PCs, the militia, and the townsfolk. She demands that all treasures of worth be brought before her, vowing death and carnage if her demands are not met.

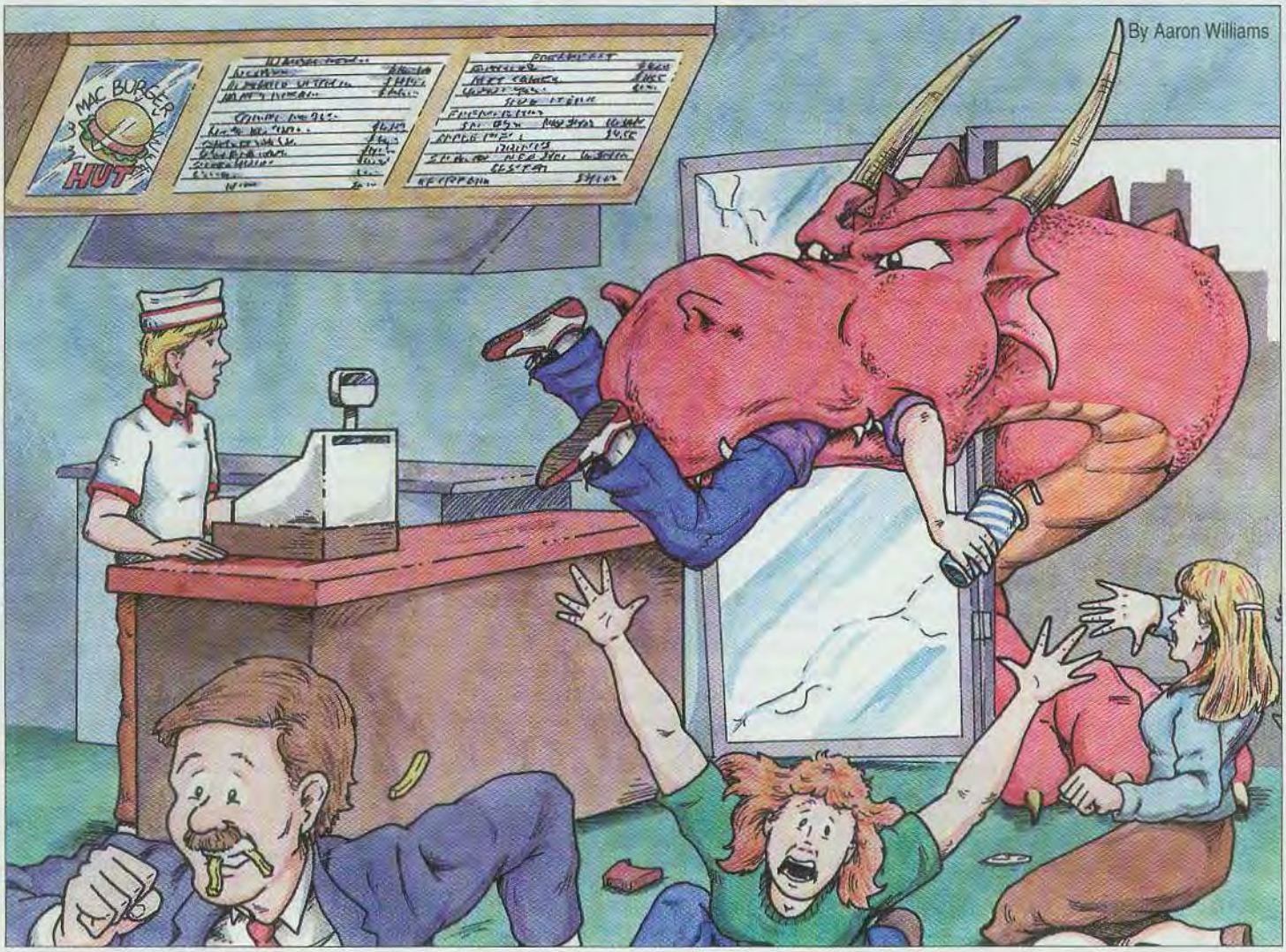
If Aryzon is still injured, he is hard-pressed to repel his green nemesis. Instead, he uses his *mirror image* spell to confuse Toxin and tries his best to lure her within range of the PCs' attacks, for only with their help can he defeat his enemy. Toxin withdraws if reduced to 30 hp or less. (Aryzon will be too tired and injured to pursue her.) The ogre magi, if present, fight until slain.

If Aryzon is healed measurably (to 70 hp or more), Toxin sees the strength in his soaring frame and withdraws, realizing that her scheme has been thwarted. "Next time, Silvercloud!" she bellows. "You won't be so fortunate next time!"

Once the dragon threat to Neriendor is alleviated, the adventure is over. Silvercloud flies off, only to return sometime later in his better-known half-elven guise. Townsfolk are in shock over the recent series of events: the appearance of the dragons, the foul wereboars, and the treachery of a local blacksmith. The look upon the PCs as great heroes, affording them every courtesy for the duration of their stay.

If his shop is destroyed in "Fires of Wrath," Aryzon resides at the Inn of the Laughing Yak until he finds the time to rebuild. (The half-elf has many friends in town who will help him.) If the PCs learn Aryzon's secret, Silvercloud kindly asks them not to reveal what they know to anyone living in Neriendor. Aryzon fears that his friends would feel slighted not having been told all these years, and Aryzon does not want to be treated any differently than before.

If the PCs are interested in continuing their wilderness explorations around Neriendor, Aryzon gladly directs them to the known lairs of other dangerous monsters. Unless she is destroyed once and for all, Toxin continues to plague Neriendor in years to come, devising even more insidious schemes by which she can gain her revenge. Ω

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1997 Annual

# Converting War Cards to BATTLESYSTEM® Rules

by Jason Asbell

**illustrated by L.A. Williams**

Players have this uncanny knack for wanting to do something that isn't really covered well in the rules. If they don't, the DM will. Imagine planning for a large war in a BIRTHRIGHT® campaign, only to find that the War Cards that come with the game don't really fit the troops everyone had in mind? In fairness, this is usually not intentional. Sooner or later, in every campaign that includes a political element (as BIRTHRIGHT does) one player-character fighter wants to raise an army—and not just any army, mind you. He wants to raise his version of the Modern Model Army. He wants to specify everything, from armor and weapons to uniforms and special training. While the BIRTHRIGHT War Cards are a quick but abstract means of dealing with large-scale combat, the AD&D® BATTLESYSTEM® rules support a greater degree of detail and tactical control. On the other hand, using the BATTLESYSTEM rules to best advantage can require an investment in miniatures, paint, battlefield topology, and time to realize those advantages. A War Cards battle can be played in under an hour with nothing more than the materials that come with the BIRTHRIGHT boxed set.

So what does a paladin lord who wants an elite mounted force composed entirely of his faithful shield-brethren do? Why should a DM be limited to those units that have War Cards already printed for them? If he decides to create his own specials, how does he specify the War Cards numbers for those "special" units? Or, if the DM wishes to run a miniatures battle using BATTLESYSTEM rules, how does he convert from War Cards units to BATTLESYSTEM units?

The BATTLESYSTEM rules have a relatively easy means of converting normal AD&D® game statistics into unit statistics. Therefore, a system to convert statistics between War Cards and BATTLESYSTEM rules (in both directions) could address these problems. What follows is a system which should make this easier. It isn't perfect, but it is fair and should account for most situations in a reasonably run campaign.

## Unit Size and Formation

To make this conversion system work, a premise from the BIRTHRIGHT rulebook must be modified: that the basic human infantry unit consists of 200 soldiers. In considering how a unit performs on the battlefield, many factors come into play. Most of these factors are reflected on the War Cards and are easily defined in BATTLESYSTEM terms. One that can be defined in BATTLESYSTEM but not in War Cards is the formation of the unit, which determines what percentage of the unit's force can be brought to bear against an opponent. Most infantry units of the time periods historically reflected in the BIRTHRIGHT setting fought in squares or nearly-square rectangles. Cavalry units, on the other hand, often presented significantly more frontage than depth. The result of this difference is that a cavalry unit can bring a higher proportion of its force to bear than can an infantry unit. To simplify this difference, rather than using the number of individuals within a unit, it works better to focus on the BATTLESYSTEM "hits per figure" (hB) as it compares to the War Cards "hit" (hWC).

### Unit Hits (Damage Potential)

In the BATTLESYSTEM rules, a group of miniature figures represents one unit. Each of those figures can endure a certain amount of

**Table 1: Melee Attack Conversions**

| War Cards Melee/Charge | BattleSystem AD |
|---|---|
| 1 | 4 |
| 2 | 6 |
| 3 | 8 |
| 4 | 10 |
| 5 | 12 |
| 6 | 2d8 |
| 7 | 2d10 |
| 8 | 2d12 |

**Notes**

❖ War Cards Charge value uses same table as melee rating but at a +1 bonus. Thus, a cavalry unit wielding AD8 long swords for both charge and melee are Melee 3, Charge 4. If the unit used AD10 lances when charging, it would be Melee 3, Charge 5.

❖ In War Cards, Regular Infantry units gain a +1 bonus to their Melee value for attacks against pikes and irregulars.

❖ In War Cards, Pike-armed units gain a +1 to their Attack and Defense values against mounted units. Human and demi-human pike units may not be charged. (Humanoid units, even orogs, do not have the discipline to put forth the thicket of pikes that would prevent a mount from charging home, so they can be charged. Their weapons are still more effective against mounted units.)

❖ Orogs gain +1 to their Melee value at night.

damage before being removed. Tougher creatures are represented by figures that can absorb more damage. This damage potential is reflected in "hits." The average human, goblin, or orc, is represented by one 1-hit (hB) figure for every 10 soldiers, while a unit of ogres would have one 3-hit figure for every 10 ogres. The War Cards system represents the same damage potential at the unit level by assigning a number of "hits" that a unit can absorb as a whole. Most units can endure 2 hits (hWC) before being destroyed, although some can suffer only one or as many as four.

Converting these "hits" from system to system is fairly simple. The standard infantry units in War Cards have 2 hWC and represent 200 soldiers. Assume for simplicity that, for humans, irregular troops are level 0, regular troops are level 1, and elite troops are level 3. In the BATTLESYSTEM rules, 200 level 0 or level 1 soldiers would appear as 20 figures of 1 hB each. Thus, 1 hWC equals 10 hB. A unit of Anuirean knights, with 3 hWC, thus has 30 hB. In AD&D terms, each of those elite knights is a 3rd-level fighter riding a heavy warhorse, which translates in BATTLESYSTEM rules into one 3-hB figure for each 10 men. Thus, for the purposes of conversion, the Anuirean Knights War Card unit actually represents only 100 soldiers. An Anuirean Levy, on the other hand, also has 3 hWC. But this rabble of semi-armed peasants can hold itself together in a fight only through sheer numbers, and there are 300 peasants and serfs in this unit.

When converting a BATTLESYSTEM unit to a War Cards unit, strive to keep the number of hWC per unit between two and four. Occasionally you might have a very small unit with only one hWC, but 4 hits per unit should be an absolute maximum. If a conversion suggests that a force would have more than four hits, it should be represented as two separate units.

**Special note on hits and converting units:** Vos and Rjurik regular infantry and scout units have one more hWC than others. This can either result from larger units or more powerful individuals making up the units. Since these races are fierce warrior peoples in rough frontiers, more powerful individuals makes more sense. Thus, Vos and Rjurik regular infantry and scouts are the same size as other Cerilian units but contain 2nd-level fighters rather than 1st-level fighters. This achieves the desired result of having more hits without significantly affecting combat ability as a unit. Also, scout units tend to be smaller than most units. Anuirean and Rjurik scout units both number 100 men each.

## Combat

To handle the actual combat, both systems have attack and defense ratings. BATTLESYSTEM rules use *Attack Dice* (AD) to reflect attack capability and *Armor Rating* (AR) to reflect defense. A unit might have a different AD value when it is in melee than when it is charging or using a missile attack ability. War Cards represents represents these with ratings of "Melee," "Charge," "Missile," and "Defense."

**Tables 1–3**, with their accompanying notes, are the result of a detailed comparison of how various units would be represented in both systems.

### Unit Size

The number of soldiers in a unit might seem crucial when figuring their game combat statistics, but the important thing to consider is the number of soldiers in the line of battle. Due to limited communications, units tend to be arrayed in squares, or columns or rectangles that are nearly square. Only those at the front take part in combat; the rest simply add momentum and act as reinforcements. Cavalry units generally deploy in shallow lines to maximize the line of battle, but they also tend to be smaller units than the infantry and therefore do not have the same problems maintaining cohesion. Historically, missile units could take advantage of massed fire, but they did not do so. Instead, the front ranks would fire, then step back to reload while the rear ranks stepped forward to fire, and so forth, with an emphasis on maintaining a consistent rate of fire rather than discharging the missiles of the entire unit at one time. This tactic was still in use through the Napoleonic era and later, until the advent of trench warfare and heavier arms made it obsolete in World War I.

Historical warfare allows some useful comparison with the BIRTHRIGHT setting. The 200 men of the Anuirean Infantry unit, armored and armed with partisans and halberds, would most likely deploy in a rectangle 25 men wide and 8 men deep. This formation is wide enough to have good frontage, deep enough to resist flanking actions, and close enough to square to be effectively managed by officers. The 100 men of the Anuirean Knights unit might also present a 25-man frontage but would be only four ranks deep to take maximum advantage of the shock value of cavalry. The 300-man levy, on the other hand, would most likely be arranged nearly square—20 men by 15 men—because the densely packed formation would bolster the questionable morale of the untrained troops and that formation would be easier for similarly untrained officers to keep under some degree of control. The

Anuirean Archers could take maximum advantage of their firepower deploying 50 men wide by 4 men deep, but this formation would be extremely vulnerable to attack by opposing infantry and cavalry, as well as being hard to command, so it would likely be placed by its officers in the same 25 men by 8 men formation as the Anuirean Infantry. The formation and morale rules for the BATTLESYSTEM rules address this somewhat, and it really does not come into play in the War Cards rules, except that there may be certain units with more "staying power" than others. For example, the Gorgon's Orog Infantry are Defense 3, Melee 3, the same as "normal" Orog Infantry, but they have 3 hWC instead of 2. This difference is the result of a larger unit.

### Casualties

What happens to a unit that suffers casualties depends on how many hWC the unit has. A unit with 1 hWC is destroyed if it suffers a single hit. You may wish to make exceptions for special units, such as a War Card representing a group of adventurers or a dragon. All other units suffer reduced Melee, Missile, and Charge values when they take casualties. In general, when a unit suffers 1 hit, those values should be halved (round up). An exception to this rule is that Charge values should always be higher than Melee values. Thus, a cavalry unit that has Melee 3 and Charge 4 normally, should have Melee 2 and Charge 3 after a hit. If a unit can withstand three or more hWC, taking a second hit should reduce the three combat values to a third of their original values (round to nearest whole number). Again, Charge values should be higher than Melee values, but this balance is not critical after the second hit. A four-hWC unit can endure three hits. After this point, the combat values should be one-fourth of the original values (round to nearest whole number). It is acceptable for Charge value to be the same as Melee value. It is possible for a unit to have a 0 value. This does not mean that the unit is not capable of executing that form of attack, only that its attack value is 0 when compared to a defending unit's defense value.

### Movement

For movement rates, 1 War Cards Move equals 6" of BATTLESYSTEM movement. Units that are exceptionally mobile, such as Scouts and Skirmishers, gain a +1 bonus to their War Cards Move value. Units that normally fight in tight formation, such as most infantry units and all pike units, suffer a −1 to their War Cards Move value. Elves may move through any terrain without penalty (i.e., it costs elven units only 1 movement point to move in any terrain). Halfling units have the ability to travel through the Shadow World, allowing rapid movement across large distances. This ability is difficult to adjudicate at the tactical or strategic level and should be dealt with or ignored at the DM's option.

**Table 2: Missile Attack Conversions**

| War Cards Missile | BattleSystem AD |
|---|---|
| 1 | 4 or 6* |
| 2 | 6 |
| 3 | 2 × 6 |
| 4 | 8 or 2 × 6 |
| 5 | 10 or 12 |
| 6 | 2d8 |
| 7 | 2d10 |
| 8 | 2d12 |

**Notes**

❖ Reduce the War Cards Missile rating by −1 for mounted units, due to decreased accuracy and rate of fire.

❖ Both longbows and shortbows are 2 × AD6 weapons. Longbows are Missile 4, shortbows Missile 3.

❖ Bow-armed elves and sling-armed halflings gain a +1 bonus on War Cards Missile ratings, due to racial advantages.

❖ The War Cards System does not track ammunition. Units with limited ammunition for missile attacks (spearmen with only 1 spear, axemen with hand axes, etc.) use half their Missile value.

❖ If the use of a missile attack affects a unit's melee capability (such as a soldiers armed with a single spear, using daggers as a backup weapon), then either ignore the missile capability entirely or reduce the unit's Melee value by one category after it uses a missile attack. (The spear/dagger unit would be represented in BATTLESYSTEM rules as being AD6 in melee with a single AD6 missile attack that reduces it to AD 4 in melee. This same unit in War Cards would be either Melee 2 or Melee 1, Missile 1 at all times.)

❖ All bow-armed units except elves gain a +1 to Missile attacks against mounted units. (It is a well-known fact that wounding or killing the mount, which is rarely as well armored as the rider, is just as effective as wounding or killing the rider when it comes to reducing the effectiveness of a cavalry unit. Elves are not trained for this tactic, so elven archers don't gain this bonus. Crossbows don't have this benefit, since their reduced rate of fire and higher penetrating power negates this tactic somewhat.)

### Morale

Units with a BATTLESYSTEM Morale (ML) lower than 10 have only one War Card morale icon. ML between 10 and 16 converts to two morale icons. ML of 17 or higher gives three morale icons. Elves and dwarves are treated as though their ML is 3 higher when assigning morale icons. Gnolls and Goblins are treated as though their ML is 3 lower when assigning morale icons. Mercenary humans always have only one morale icon. Converting in the other direction is slightly more difficult, since there is such a wide range of ML ratings. Use the BATTLESYSTEM rules for morale. In general, assume irregulars, militia, and levies are 0-level humans; regulars, scouts and nonhuman units are 1st-level fighters (with the exception of Vos and Rjurik Infantry, and Rjurik Scouts, which are 2nd-level fighters); and elite troops are 3rd-level fighters. Archers, artillerists, crossbowmen and pikemen should gain bonuses for special equipment.

## Unit Costs

The last important factor in converting units for a BIRTHRIGHT campaign is their cost. Muster Cost is the cost to raise and outfit a unit, and Maintenance Cost, the ongoing cost to keep the unit in fighting form—wages, weapons and armor upkeep, etc. These costs are not exactly reflective of the price to buy equipment—a unit of irregulars could be

**Table 3: Defense Conversions**

| War Cards Defense | BattleSystem AR |
|---|---|
| 1 | 10 |
| 2 | 9 |
| 3 | 8 |
| 4 | 6–7 |
| 5 | 5 |
| 6 | 4 |
| 7 | 3 |
| 8 | 2 |

**Notes**

Khinasi and Goblin units suffer a –1 penalty to their Defense ratings (goblins because of their lower-quality equipment, Khinasi due to their tactics–oriented around maneuver and quickness rather than the static punch/counterpunch tactics of the other races.)

Brecht elite units and most Khinasi units are slightly more maneuverable than other races, due to their concentration on lighter armor and maneuver tactics, but their superiority is not enough to provide a rules modifier.

outfitted for the 1 GB muster cost, but the horses and armor of a unit of Knights would cost far more than 6 GB (the knights, being lesser nobility, already own their own equipment). Muster and maintenance costs cover the administrative details and support while in the field as well as equipment. To arrive at muster costs for units, consider the questions in **Table 4.** Each "yes" answer is worth the cost indicated on the table.

Maintenance Cost is half the Muster Cost, rounded down, with a minimum of 1 GB and a maximum of 2 GBs. Irregulars (who do require special training but nothing else), end up costing 1 GB to muster and 1 GB to maintain (1/1). Scouts require special training and equipment, as do all regular infantry units. This explains why Levies are 0/1 cost, Knights are 6/2, and most regular infantry are 2/1.

### Exceptions

Khinasi city-based regular infantry are not elite but cost 1 GB more to muster than those of other humans and Khinasi light cavalry cost 1 GB less to muster (3 GB Muster, 2GB Maintenance). Brecht knights are much more lightly armed and armored than others and cost 1 GB less to muster. Dwarves cost the same as their human equivalent (Guards are Elite Infantry, Crossbows are special elite archers). Elves cost double for their Muster Cost but have the same Maintenance Cost as compared to a similar human unit. Halflings, when available, cost 1 GB more than their human equivalents for both Muster and Maintenance Costs. For Goblins, the first two questions are worth 0.5 GB each, (round up after adding them up). Goblins are available as mercenaries for the same price as regularly mustered troops, so the last question should be ignored for goblin troops. Gnolls cost 1 GB more Muster Cost than a human equivalent–they're more powerful creatures, and quite greedy. Despite being generally larger than humans, Orogs do not exhibit significant military advantages and cost the same as human troops. Ogres should never be available except as mercenaries (and only one per army at a time–the mercenary bands do not get along well with each other), and these units should cost an extra 2 GB Muster Cost and 1 GB Maintenance Cost over human Mercenary Infantry. Extremely special units, like single-entity large creatures such as giants or dragons, should not be available for hire and should require special role-played pricing. In general, Undead will be raised using the Legion of Dead Realm Spell and their Muster cost is the cost of that spell. Since they only exist for the duration of the spell, they have no Maintenance cost. Undead raised by other means (multiple castings of Animate dead or a special ability) which do not have a limited "lifetime" would require no muster cost, only the necessary spellcasting, but would need to be maintained, at half the cost of a similar living unit, minimum 1 GB per unit.

**Table 4: Muster Cost Checklist**

| Question | Cost if "Yes" |
|---|---|
| Does this unit require special training? | 1 GB |
| Does this unit require special equipment? | 1 GB |
| Is this an elite unit? | 2 GB |
| Is this a mounted unit? | 2 GB |
| Does this unit have siege engines? | 2 GB |
| If this a mercenary unit? | 2 GB |

## Army Size

Another thing to consider which many players would like to ignore is how large an army a domain can reasonably support without creating undue strain on the population. As it is possible for a domain to generate money by many means, it is not as simple as just being able to pay for the maintenance costs for every unit. Toward this end, a new cost, called the Population Cost for each unit should be defined. The Population Cost of a given unit is equal to its number of hits. The Population Level of a domain is equal to twice the sum of its province levels. Note that holdings generate income but do not change the population of a domain. A wealthy domain can afford better troops than a poorer domain of the same population, but the number of troops the population can support remains approximately the same–the wealthy domain has the advantage of better troops, plus being able to attract mercenaries from abroad. The sum of the Population Costs for all units controlled by the domain may not exceed the Population Level. Thus, a domain with a single level 4 province (Population Level 8) could support 4 units of irregulars (Population Cost 2 each), or some other combination that adds to 4. A larger domain can support a larger army. Units employed as mercenaries do not count against this number, as they are supported more by the treasury of the domain than its population. Undead and special-case units do not count, for similar reasons.

## BATTLESYSTEM to War Cards Conversions

Now that we've covered the various aspects of units, let's look at some examples of converting BATTLESYSTEM units to their War Cards equivalents:

## Lifebane–Cerilian Dragon

**BATTLESYSTEM Statistics**

AD 12 AR 3 Hits 8
ML n/a MV 12"/30"
Radiates Fear, AD 2d12 breath weapon in a 2" × 4" × 8" cone.

**War Card**

Move 5 Defense 7
Melee 5 Morale 3 icons Hits 1*
Lifebane's breath weapon acts as same as a *fireball* spell (for purposes of BATTLESYSTEM rules) and is usable during the Magic phase on any single unit in the same area as Lifebane. Lifebane's Fear effect is automatic during the Magic phase, as a *fear* spell, on all units (friendly or enemy) in the same area as him during the Magic phase. Friendly units may make a rally attempt immediately. For a "Hero" creature, 20 HD translates to 1 "hit," so even though he's a dragon and very powerful, Lifebane has but 1 hit in a unit level battle. If Lifebane suffers a hit, he is removed from the combat but is not actually slain unless it is a "D" result (similar to the effect of the "Adventurers" card). Lifebane is immune to all F or R results from magic. As an alternative, Lifebane could be considered an "Adventurer" stacked with a particular unit, and the Adventurers War Card used, but this would not give the full effect that a dragon would have on the battlefield. Lifebane is too special to have a Muster Cost and Maintenance Cost, and he does not affect the population–unless he grows hungry.

## The Necromancer's Skeletons

**BATTLESYSTEM Statistics**

AD6 AR 8 Hits 1
ML n/a MV 12"
Hits sustained from missile fire are halved.

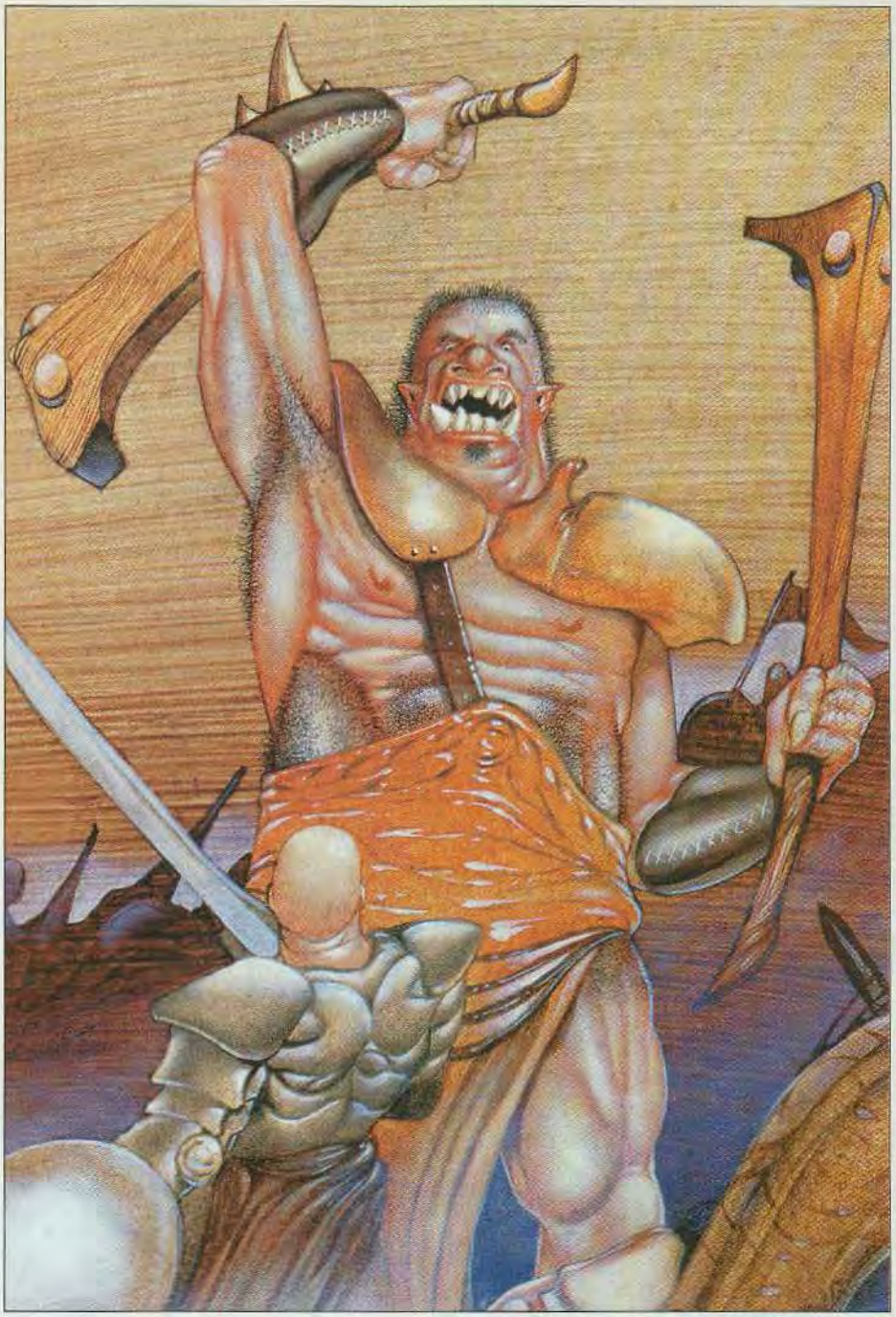
**War Card**

Move 2 Defense 3
Melee 2 Morale 3 icons Hits 2
Immune to all F or R results. +1 Defense vs. missile attacks. **(Note:** Sticklers for detail could revoke this +1 Defense rating against Artillerists, as their missiles are ballistae or even larger weapons.) No Muster Cost or population effect, but 1 GB Maintenance Cost.

## The Necromancer's Zombies

**BATTLESYSTEM Statistics**

AD 8 AR 9 Hits 2
ML n/a MV 6"



**War Card**

Move 1 Defense 2
Melee 3 Morale 3 icons Hits 2
Immune to all F or R results. No Muster Cost or population effect, but 1 GB Maintenance Cost.

## Human Irregular Spearmen

**BATTLESYSTEM Statistics**

AD 6 AR 8 Hits 1
ML 10 MV 12"
**Special:** AD 6 spear missile attack, once only 1"/2"/3", after this attack, melee value drops to AD 4.

**War Card**

Move 2 Defense 3 Missile 1
Melee 1 Morale 2 icons Hits 6*
(3 units of 2 hits)
*or*
Move 2 Defense 3
Melee 2 Morale 2 icons Hits 6*
* (3 units of 2 hits)
Due to limited ammunition, range, and the effect on melee capability make it unlikely that the thrown spear attack would be used, so it is a valid option to ignore the possibility. These units total 3 GB Muster Cost, 3 GB Maintenance Cost, and 6 Population Cost.

## Human Regular Axemen

**BATTLESYSTEM Statistics (20 figures)**

AD 6 AR 7 1 hits
ML 12 MV 12"
Throwing axe attack, twice only 2"/4"/6".

**Regular Axemen War Card**

Move 1 Defense 3 Missile 1
Melee 3 Morale 2 icons Hits 2

(Except for the missile capability, the Anuirean Infantry War Card could be used. Usage of throwing axes has historical significance, though. Since these were noted as regular troops, they usually fight in close order formation and therefore suffer the reduced movement restriction. For anyone who wonders how battle axes could be used in close order formation, read about the shield-wall tactics of the Saxon housecarls which may be found in any good accounting of the battle of Hastings in 1066.) These units total 2 GB Muster Cost, 1 GB Maintenance Cost, and 2 Population Cost.

## Goblin Shortbowmen

**BATTLESYSTEM Statistics (40 figures)**

AD 4 AR 9 Hits 1
ML 11 MV 9
2 × AD 6 missile attack 10"/15"/20"

**War Card**

Move 1 Defense 2 Missile 3
Melee 1 Morale 1 icon Hits 4*
*(2 units of 2 hits)

Use the Goblin Archers card. They should be 2 GB Muster Cost, 1 GB Maintenance Cost, and 2 Population Cost each.

## War Cards to BATTLESYSTEM Conversions

## Adventurers

**War Card**

Move 4 Defense +2 Missile +2
Melee +2 Morale 3 Icons Hits 2

For adventurers, use the BATTLESYSTEM rules for describing heroes on the battlefield to define a figure for each individual adventurer.

## Anuirean Knights

**War Cards (2)**

Move 2 Defense 4 Charge 6
Melee 4 Morale 3 icons Hits 6*
*(2 units of 3 hits)

**BATTLESYSTEM Statistics (40 figures, two units of 20)**

AD [12]10 AR 6 Hits 4
ML 17 Move 15"

## Anuirean Infantry

**War Cards (6)**

Move 1 Defense 3
Melee 3 Morale 2 icons Hits 12*
*(6 units of 2 hits)

**BATTLESYSTEM Statistics (120 figures, 6 units of 20)**

AD 8 AR 8 Hits 1
ML 12 Move 12"

## Anuirean Archers

**War Cards (2)**

Move 2 Defense 2 Missile 4
Melee 2 Morale 2 icons Hits 4*
*(2 units of 2 hits)

**BATTLESYSTEM Statistics (40 figures, two units of 20)**

AD 6 AR 9 Hits 1
Move 12 ML 13
2 × longbow attack 7"/14"/21"

## Dwarf Crossbowmen

**War Card**

Move 1 Defense 4 Missile 4
Melee 2 Morale 3 icons Hits 2

**BATTLESYSTEM Statistics (20 figures)**

AD 6 AR 7 Hits 1
ML 14 Move 6"
Heavy crossbow attack 8"/16"/24".

By Joseph Pillsbury
YES, IT IS DRAGON STEW AGAIN... AND THERE'S STILL 5,000 POUNDS OF IT LEFT IN THE ICE BOX...
ANOTHER DOWNSIDE TO BEING A DRAGONSLAYER: LEFTOVERS

*Jason Asbel is a 17-year veteran of the D&D® and AD&D® games, most of that time spent as DM. When not working as a software engineer, Jason runs the domain action half of a BIRTHRIGHT campaign.*

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# A New Role for the FIFTH AGE™ Game

by Steven Brown

*"Put another bracer under that corner," Dani Skilborne ordered, "Do you want the whole stage to collapse before he even arrives!?"*

*As usual, the people of Fallow were working, and working hard. The town was a small farming community remarkable only for the fact that it clung to life on the thin strip of arable land where the Northern Wastes meet the Turbidus Ocean.*

*Life was a constant struggle to survive, so the residents could certainly be forgiven for their inability simply to relax and have a good time. Even on the eve of the Festival of the Fields, Fallow's only holiday, everyone in town had at least three important tasks to accomplish before sundown. In every house jackets were being mended and gowns were being sewn. Festive dishes simmered on stoves and, when the cook was absolutely sure no prying eyes were about, secret ingredients were lovingly added. Most importantly, however, a dozen hardy men and women labored in the town hall to complete construction of a small stage, though they could scarcely believe why.*

*Even if Fallow appeared on any maps, which it didn't, the Festival of the Fields would be of little concern to anyone outside the town. The event was a celebration of the harvest, similar to holidays in any number of small villages across the continent. This made it unlikely that anyone would journey to this remote location to perform at the festival, and even more unlikely that a storyteller of distinction would make the trip.*

*Still, when the town awoke, three hours before the sun rose, every single man, woman, and child knew he was coming. They knew that tonight they would celebrate the Festival of the Fields with tales told by Ansalon's greatest bard—the Herald!*

The world of Krynn, setting for the DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE® game as well as the DRAGONLANCE® Saga novels, has always been filled with wonder and mystery. As the Age of Mortals opens, however, a host of enigmatic personalities have risen to positions of power and influence. Looking at figures such as the Shadow Sorcerer and the Master of the Tower, and considering events such as the raising of the Silvanesti shield, the sealing of Thorbardin, and the return of the Dark Knights' "Vision" despite the absence of their goddess, it is easy to conclude that life after the Second Cataclysm has many more questions than before—and even fewer answers.

Perhaps the most enigmatic of all these new personalities is the Herald. Shortly after the dawn of the Fifth Age, this "singer of songs and teller of tales" began to appear at inns, gatherings, festivals, and celebrations across Ansalon. He claimed to have no recollection of his own past. "My memories are those of Krynn" he tells his audience before each tale. "Her history is my life."

While his stories occasionally clash with popular opinion, most scholarly critics agree that the Herald's tales are completely accurate. More importantly, audiences are captivated by his performances; his stories are so captivating, his descriptions so lush, his emotions so true, that listeners feel they have actually born witness to the events he relates.

Dressed in the same plain robes one would expect any wandering bard to wear, the Herald crisscrosses the continent, arriving just as an audience has gathered, telling tales that always seem to have a direct bearing on local events, then leaving as quietly as he came. Part of the mystery behind this man is that he is never seen actually traveling from place to place; he

simply departs one town and appears at the next in a day or two. Another oddity is that, although he has no known schedule, the folk in the towns he visits always know when he is coming. They simply awaken one morning with the certain knowledge that the Herald will be performing that evening or the next. Visitors to these towns are shocked to see whole communities laying down their usual work to prepare for the coming event, everyone pitching in to cook a small feast or build a suitable venue for the bard.

More often than not, a visit from the Herald comes within days of an event of local or even global significance. His tales are filled with lessons designed to comfort and prepare his audience for coming events, or with advice on how to prevent a looming catastrophe. In the sixth year following the Second Cataclysm (6 s.c.), the Herald spoke to a group of draconians who were planning to revolt against Malys, telling them tales of a community recently founded in Teyr, run by the draconian hero Kang. He appeared on Southern Ergoth late in the year 11 s.c., spreading tales of the icy destruction that white dragons bring to their newly settled homes. When Gellidus arrived a few months later, many lives were saved by the knowledge gleaned from the stories.

The Herald has also been known to give advice to important individuals. He spent several days with Dunbar Mastersmate shortly before the wizard stepped down as head of the Order of White Robes and disappeared in 7 s.c. Those close to Dunbar say that the Herald mainly told anecdotes of the sea, pleasant nostalgia for the wizard, and fantastic tales of bird-men known as the Kyrie. It is likewise rumored that he visited Hylo many times in the years following the Kender Flight, paying special attention to a young kender named Billee Juniper. Many say that when Billee assumed providence over the kender, she changed her name to Belladonna because of a story the Herald told her.

Though no one is certain how he knows when to arrive at a significant site, and many are mistrustful of his motives, it is clear that the Herald knows the ebb and flow of events on Ansalon better than anyone else.

## Who is the Herald?

Who is the man under the worn cloak? Where did he learn to spin yarns with such conviction? How can he know so much about events decades or even centuries old? And why does his arrival so often augur events of great historic significance?

There has been rampant speculation as to the Herald's true identity. However, since the man himself is difficult to track and nearly impossible to predict, a definitive answer seems unlikely to be forthcoming. Still, there are several theories.

One popular theory is that the Herald is the avatar of the god Gilean, placed on Krynn shortly before the Second Cataclysm. Supposedly, the god of all knowledge knew that he and his brethren would soon have to withdraw from the world, so he created the Herald as a resource for his followers in the days to come. There is even a small group that believes that the Herald is actually Gilean himself. They believe that their deity has found some way to circumvent the agreement the gods made with Chaos and has returned to Krynn in this form to disguise his subterfuge.

A group of young ascetics have expressed the belief that the Herald is Astinus Lorekeeper, the former master of their Order of Ascetics and the Great Library of the Ages. The new leader of the Order, Bertrem, himself a former pupil and associate of Astinus', has not commented publicly on this assertion. Privately, however, he is said to have chastised his students for perpetuating such ludicrous notions intoning, "We are chroniclers of truth, not common rumormongers!"

In the town of Solace, a small, deeply devoted group fanatically subscribes to the notion that the Herald is a young man named Master Lor. He is the son of a local councilman who, at a very young age, developed into a prescient of phenomenal ability. His ability to see distant places and times, and his heartfelt desire to help the people in his visions, led Lor to run away from home several times a month. While his parents and their retainers did their best to keep track of the boy, one day he simply disappeared. Young Master Lor was deeply loved by all the people of Solace, and his disappearance was a heartbreak felt keenly by the entire community. With his growing powers of prognostication, no one doubted that he would fare well in the world. Still, nothing has been heard of Lor since well before the Second Cataclysm. Perhaps it is merely their collective worry, but this group is convinced that the Herald is really their missing Master Lor.

One of the strangest notions regarding the Herald's identity is also quickly becoming one of the most popular. Groups of all religions, educational backgrounds, and ages believe that the Herald is the living embodiment of the Tobril (the book containing the gods' divine plan for Krynn). It is said that in the Second Cataclysm, the burst of pure chaos that reshaped the world itself, the celestial constellation that held the Tobril was freed and given human form on Krynn—the Herald. Knowing nothing other than the past, present, and future of Krynn, he is naturally drawn to events of importance. His new human form, however, will not let him simply observe the unfolding drama; feeling a kinship to the mortals of Krynn, the Herald is compelled to share bits of his memory that he hopes will guide them through the coming days.

Finally, there are persistent stories that the Herald is actually Raistlin Majere in disguise. Adherents to this theory are quick to point out that the legendary mage is "the Master of Past and Present." Who else would have such detailed knowledge of Krynn's history? They also point out the similarities in dress and manner between the Herald and Raistlin, both preferring voluminous robes that hide their faces, and both with a habit of simply appearing when and where they are needed most.

Who is the Herald really? Only the bard himself can answer that question. When it is posed to him, though, he simply reflects, "Who I am is meaningless. What matters is who you think I am." He then relates the tale of Hollowvale, a small town that was once terrorized by a band of goblins. The townspeople vastly outnumbered their tormentors, but none among them was able to rally his neighbors to coordinated action. One day a young man came to town and saw the trouble. As he ate in the local tavern, where he urged those he met to defend their town; he suggested a possible strategy and even offered to lend his sword to the fight. The townsfolk not only took his advice but also elected him leader of the undertaking, following him with a loyalty bordering on zealotry. The young man's plans were not brilliant, his ability with a sword was mediocre at best, but he led the people of Hollowvale to a resounding victory over the goblin raiders. Why? As a matter of coincidence, the young man's name was Tanis. He was no relation to the Hero of the Lance (he was not even

a half-elf) but the people thought he was. That made all the difference.

*That the Herald would soon arrive was miraculous enough. Since he traveled by some unknown (presumably magical) method, though, little thought was given to how he might cross the seemingly endless expanses of sand to the south; he would simply arrive at the appointed time. So it was a complete shock to every living soul when a lone cloaked figure leading a haggard horse walked out of the desert and into the town square.*

*No one remembered exactly why Fallow's founders decided to settle in such a remote location, but their descendants had no choice but to stay. The fields produced barely enough sustenance to feed the dozen or so families and their livestock; there was never enough surplus even to consider making the perilous trip across the Wastes to the more populated parts of Ansalon. Needless to say, the town did not receive many visitors.*

*For a very long moment everyone simply stood stock still and silently stared at the man, who seemed content to wait to see what the people of Fallow would finally do. It struck Dani Skilborne that the man might be injured or suffering from sun poisoning, or perhaps he was merely insane. Whatever the case, no progress would be made by engaging him in a mass staring contest. She approached him while her neighbors continued to gawk.*

*"Welcome to Fallow, stranger," she began hesitantly.*

*"F-festival?" the man croaked. His voice was sharp and dry enough to spark a kindling fire.*

*Holding out a bottle of water, Dani continued incredulously, "You've arrived just in time. The celebration begins in an hour, and you're not going to believe the highlight—we didn't know ourselves 'til this morning."*

*"H-herald?" he asked.*

*"Why ... yes." Dani answered, oddly disturbed at the stranger's familiarity with local events.*

*"G-good. Traveled s-so far ... hate to m-miss the show." A smile cracked the stranger's sunburned lips, then he fell face-first onto the dusty common.*

## The Herald's Host

One of the best known figures on Ansalon, the Herald is considered by many to be the greatest bard ever to draw breath. The power of his presence and the value of his messages are legendary from the Worldscap Mountains to the Forest of Gunthar. Many folk say that they would ride all day for the opportunity to actually see him perform, but no one knows for sure when or where that will be—but there are a very few who have an inkling.

Occasionally, when someone feels not only the joy and pain of the characters in the Herald's story, but the pulse and breath of the tale itself, a curious bond is created. The tales he hears call to him, begging to be shared with other audiences, urging him to learn them, to master their every detail and spread them like dandelions on a summer breeze. At the end of the performance, the person is filled with a certain knowledge of a time and location when the Herald will appear again. It may not be his next performance, but it is the next one that the individual would be able to reach.

Those that answer this call become students of the Herald, following him, learning his tales, telling and retelling them to hone their own storytelling skills, working desperately to duplicate every nuance of their new master's flawless performances. Known as "Keepers of the Word," these students are the only ones who can accurately predict in advance when the Herald will appear. Though they know one another well, the Keepers usually travel alone so that each may take the opportunity to stop and tell the stories he's learned to those he meets on the way, and to spread the news of the Herald's upcoming appearance.

Often a Keeper of the Word will travel Ansalon for one or two years, following the trail of the Herald. However, once he has mastered a substantial repertoire of tales, songs, and anecdotes, his knowledge of his teacher's plans are replaced with an itinerary of his own. Sometimes he continues to wander from town to town, sometimes he finds a tavern or inn in need of an entertainer, but he devotes the rest of his life to teaching the lessons he learned from the Herald—though occasionally he feels the old call, before his former master appears in the area. No matter how many years a Keeper of the Word has been telling a particular tale, he never tires of hearing it from the Herald's own lips.

### Role: Keeper of the Word

This is a new role for use in the DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE game. Although rules for a Bard role are presented in the *Heroes of Defiance* boxed set, the Keeper of the Word role is for players who want their heroes to have a unique tie to not just the world but also the history of Krynn.

These heroes have spent quite a long time following and studying the Herald, his tales, and his storytelling technique, as described above. A Keeper of the Word can easily fit into a party of more adventurous heroes; his skill is in finding tales and anecdotes that are apropos to any situation, telling stories that are not only entertaining but that also contain a kernel of practical, helpful information. He is likely to spend his entire life traveling the countries of Ansalon, spinning yarns in the towns he visits. If he does so with a band of heroes, he will at the very least gather more exciting tales to add to his store.

#### Roleplaying

A Keeper of the Word is motivated by the joy of his art; telling a tale well is its own reward. This is not so much a profession as a calling. The stories of the Herald called out to this hero in an almost spiritual way. He is devoted to sharing that feeling with as many people as he can.

Heroes with this role should be generally friendly and outgoing; they enjoy meeting and talking to people. They love performing. While Keepers of the Word are likely to become engaged in all manner of quests, searches, and adventures, they always believe that the most important part they can play in these endeavors is supplying useful information to their comrades. They do not necessarily shy away from physical involvement; they simply consider their knowledge to be their biggest asset.

One aspect of this role that may give some players pause is the hero's vast knowledge of Krynn's history. If a player is not at least fairly well acquainted with the DRAGONLANCE Saga, he might be better off playing the bard or street performer role from Heroes of Defiance (neither of which relies as heavily on established history). However, if the Narrator is willing to pay the player a little extra attention, giving him hints as to appropriate tales and knowledge his hero would know, this role can be enjoyable for a new player to take.

Because there is such a large volume of established history (no fewer than 60 novels and short story collections), this role can also be problematic for Narrators. If a hero in your FIFTH AGE game chooses this role, sit down with the player and discuss which books or other

source materials you have each read. Decide ahead of time what, if any, sources he may quote. After all, though Keepers of the Word are well trained, they are not all knowing. Each Keeper has a few historical figures or geographic regions whose tales he specializes in; in all other aspects of history, he is merely well-versed, rather than expert.

### Requirements

In order to qualify for this role, a hero must first fulfill the requirements of all bards. He must have a Spirit score of at least 4 and a Presence score of at least 5.

The crux of a Keeper of the Word's activities is being able to recall tales that are appropriate for practically any situation. He must remember hundreds or thousands of stories and be able to draw analogies and connections between events that, on the surface, seem to have very little in common. It takes a particularly well-trained mind to do this, often on the spur of the moment, so a hero choosing this role must have an Reason score of 6 or higher.

The second part of a Keeper of the Word's role is performing, often before very large crowds. He must not only be proficient at, but also comfortable with holding the attention of dozens or hundreds of people at a time. To reflect his years of practice, as well as the lessons learned training under the greatest bard on all of Krynn, a hero with this role must have a Presence code of "B" or "A." Heroes with a "B" code are comfortable entertaining crowds of 50–75 people, while those with an "A" code are not daunted by an audience of any size.

### Advantages

The main advantage that a Keeper of the Word has in any situation is his knowledge of Krynn's past. These heroes use history's example to provide them with insight into the difficulties in which they and their companions find themselves. If the situation pertains to a Keeper's area of expertise, the Narrator should allow him simply to know all but the most obscure information. For more general circumstances, the hero may attempt a Reason action to see what, if any, useful information he recalls. The difficulty rating of this action is left up to the Narrator, but it should exceed desperate only in the most esoteric cases. If the action succeeds, the Narrator should provide the player with useful information or a practical action he can attempt to defuse his current predicament.

## AD&D® Kit Conversion

### Keeper of the Word

The DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE game uses the new SAGA™ rules. However, this game would never have been possible without the many fans who supported the DRAGONLANCE products produced for the AD&D game. For those who use those rules for their FIFTH AGE adventures, we present an AD&D kit converting the Keeper of the Word role.

If there is any confusion during conversion, assume that Keepers of the Word follow the usual rules for bard player characters.

**Secondary Skills:** Keepers of the Word come from all backgrounds. The one thing they have in common is an abiding love of storytelling. Any secondary skills are allowed, but the most common ones are farmer, sailor, and scribe.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Keepers of the Word are allowed the normal range of weapons available to bards. As a whole, however, the group is pacifistic. Most Keepers carry nonlethal weapons and use them only when other options have been exhausted. They consider their greatest weapon to be the power of their tales.

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** *Required:* Ancient history, languages (modern). *Recommended:* Dancing, disguise, etiquette, juggling, languages (ancient), riding, and additional musical instruments.

**Skill Progression:** Keepers of the Word are a studious and intellectual lot; they develop their Read Languages ability first and foremost. While the Detect Noise and Climb Walls abilities can be very useful to a hero who spends his career traveling, Keepers generally have little or no use for the Pick Pockets ability.

**Preferred Schools:** Keepers of the Word are intrigued by all schools of magic. They are as likely to study one as another, but as a result of their tendency to specialize, they usually know spells from no more than four different schools.

**Barred Schools:** No schools are barred for Keepers of the Word.

**Equipment:** There is no specific equipment associated with Keepers of the Word. Other than sturdy traveling clothes and a tome in which to keep their tales, they have only gear befitting their social status.

**Special Benefits:** Because Keepers of the Word usually have at least one area of expertise, a PC using this kit can select one historical figure or geographic region that he has studied extensively. When rolling to see if the Keeper knows something about an obscure subject within his field, he receives a +25% bonus. Also, because Keepers train under the greatest bard ever to walk Krynn, they gain a +3 bonus when using their bardic abilities for formal performances.

**Special Hindrances:** Keepers of the Word are so devoted to their art that they ignore developing their martial skills almost entirely. As a result, they gain weapon proficiencies at half the rate bards usually do (only 1 slot every 8 levels). Furthermore, their lives are so dedicated to telling their tales that Keepers must succeed at a Wisdom check to refrain from spontaneously beginning a performance whenever they are in a relaxed social situation.

**Races:** Unlike most bards, Keepers of the Word can come from any race. The only requirement is that the tales of the Herald have touched them deeply and changed them forever.

Keepers of the Word are as interested in sharing their knowledge as they are with accumulating it. They constantly search for audiences and almost never walk away from an opportunity to hone their skills just a little more. As a result, heroes with this role gain an automatic trump bonus for Presence actions to perform their tales. The situation must be a formal performance, though the audience does not necessarily have to be large. For instance, the bonus would apply when telling tales around a campfire, or when addressing any kind of rally, but it would not apply to attempts to distract enemy troops or to calm a startled group of characters.

Finally, a Keeper of the Word gains the same advantage all bards do, the ability to attempt the "Enthrall An Audience" action. This is a Presence action, opposed by Perception, which allows the Keeper to so engross his listeners that they fail to notice other minor events happening around them—such as other heroes sneaking into an off-limits room or abducting someone at the edge of the crowd. The Narrator determines the difficulty according to the circumstances. The listener who would be hardest to distract

(highest Perception, acute senses, etc.) provides the opposition.

**Disadvantages**

Because Keepers of the Word focus all their attention on learning historical tales and practicing their storytelling technique, there is little time left for sharpening their physical skills. A hero who chooses this role must devote such great a portion of his life to his art that he is unable to develop his martial skills fully. As a result, any hero who begins play as a Keeper of the Word may have only one of his physical codes be higher than "C." A hero who changes to this role during the game may ignore this rule, but he may no longer attempt to raise any of his physical codes no matter how many quests he completes. Furthermore, the hero must spend at least one year of game time following the Herald to his various appearances before he can claim any of the role's advantages.

One weakness that all Keepers of the Word suffer is a compulsive desire to tell their tales. They simply can't turn down an opportunity to perform. A hero with this role wants to entertain practically every character he meets, and he must make a challenging Reason action to keep from breaking into song (or starting to weave a tale) whenever he is in a relaxed social situation (such as at a tavern, party, or festival).

## Using the Herald in Play

Narrators will find that the Herald can be an effective tool in their bag of storytelling tricks. He is integrally linked to any event of importance on Ansalon. If your heroes are involved in events that will have significant repercussions on the people and places around them, the Herald can have a place in your adventures.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to this application is the very mystery that makes the Herald so interesting. After all, how can a Narrator involve a character if he doesn't know who he's really dealing with? The answer is that no one knows who the Herald is, not Palin, Goldmoon, Mirielle Abrena, nor any of the Dragon Overlords. This articles contains five possible explanations as to the Herald's identity. Pick the one you like best (or create your own), and define the Herald along those lines. Some or all of these theories may be disproved as the Fifth Age campaign progresses, but nothing heightens a mystery more than a good red-herring. Whomever you decide the Herald is, his Presence should be no lower than 10A, and his Reason should be no lower than 9B, with knowledge of at least the sorcerous school of Summoning. As to other magical abilities, dozens of reports tell of him using practically all of the schools and spheres to some degree.

Regardless of who he really is, the Herald is a very important figure in the Fifth Age. He has inspired a small army of students who can be found telling their tales in taverns in every major town on the continent. More importantly, the Herald seems to appear only in places where some important incident is about to occur. Every time the heroes hear that he will be performing locally, they should begin to wonder what event looms on the horizon.

It would certainly be possible to design a series of adventures where the heroes themselves are the "important event" that the Herald is following. If they are on an important mission sneaking through enemy territory (one of the Dragon Realms or a city controlled by the Knights of Takhisis), it would be quite vexing to find that their moves are being mirrored by someone as conspicuous as the Herald.

Another possible way to fit the Herald into a campaign is to make him the only available source of information on a critical matter. If the heroes absolutely must know the truth about a historical event, they would have the unenviable task of having to guess where the Herald will next appear, getting there in time, and somehow convincing him to answer their questions. If they are only a few hours late, the bard has left the stage and the town, completely disappearing until his next performance. Any Keepers of the Word who were there, though, can relate the tale accurately.

In the end, there are as many roles for the Herald to play in your Dragonlance: Fifth Age game as there are stories of Krynn's past. Whether he is an enigmatic figure haunting the periphery of your stories or the guiding inspiration behind one or more of the heroes in the party, the Herald not only has a part in your stories but he knows exactly how they will end.

*Dani leaned against a tree at the back of the crowd, watching a performance unlike any she had ever seen. The Herald was every bit as good as she knew he would be. The townspeople were mesmerized as he wove a tale of the War of the Lance. Next to her, Gregor, the stranger who rode out of the Wastes, stood mouthing the words the Herald spoke, mimicking his every gesture, trying to capture it all for future reference.*

*Gregor had been suffering only from slight dehydration. He would have to rest for a week or so in town, but he would be ready to leave after that. As she watched his expressive hands flit through the air and his full lips silently speak, she hoped he might stay longer. He was a hearty soul, raised on a farm she guessed. He would fit in well in Fallow. Besides, as entertaining as this unique performance was, it would be even better to have a full-time bard living in town.*

*"Enraged at the perverse defilement," the Herald intoned, " the metallic dragons rose into the sky, bent on rescuing their eggs and seeking revenge on the forces of the Dark Queen."*

*One thing still puzzled Dani. According to Gregor, the Herald generally appeared only in places where great things were about to happen. She had lived in Fallow her entire life and nothing of interest, let alone significance, had ever happened.*

*"The tide of the war was about to change. One by one, lands that had been smothered in misery and despair, crushed under the heels of the Dragonarmies, regained the will to fight their oppressors. This rebirth of hope spread on the wind, flying from town to town as the Good dragons, absent from Ansalon for centuries, passed overhead in shimmering formations of gold, silver, and bronze."*

*The crowd rose to its feet as one. The applause was as heartfelt as it was raucous, and it ended as abruptly as it began. The entire town frozen into amazed silence by the phalanx of metallic dragons that flew low over the waves of the Turbidus Ocean and roared directly overhead. They came from the Dragon Isles and were headed generally southeast with determination in their eyes. It was just as the Herald had described. But why were the dragons returning now? What threat brought them out of their self-imposed exile?*

*When the people of Fallow turned to ask, however, the stage was empty.*

*Steven "Stan!" Brown recently took all of his worldly possessions on a cross-country tour, settling with them in Renton, WA. When he isn't rearranging various shelves of books and CDs, he works as the Lead Designer for the Dragonlance product group.*

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# The Magic of Myth Drannor

## Spells and Magical Items of the Ancient Realms

by Ed Greenwood

**illustrated by Jim Crabtree**

*Elminster looked around the silent vault. In the soft, unending light, the old, damp walls seemed to be watching him. The young, hawk-nosed man looked across the heaped, frozen fire of gems so deep and numerous that it would take ten minutes of strolling to reach the far end of the long and lustrous pile they formed.*

*"I thought," he said slowly, "that in any elven test I'd be taken into the deep places of the forest, to stand at the shadowed hearts of rings of trees so old that that their cloaks of moss would be thicker than the length of my arm. That's the sort of place I see when I think of elven magic at its strongest, and of the true essence of what it is to be an elf."*

*He turned his head suddenly to fix the Srinshee with a frowning gaze. "So why are we here instead, in a tomb full of old baubles?"*

*The little elven sorceress did not—quite—smile as she met his gaze, but there was a definite twinkle in her old eyes.*

*"You are a human; what you can best understand of elven magic is battle-spells and old, cold things that store enchantments within themselves. Out among the trees forces are at work too precious by far for any man to be allowed a chance to set them awry. Here you can do Cormanthor a little less damage."*

*Elminster gave her a wry smile. "My thanks for that."*

*The elven sorceress raised a wrinkled brow. "Make no mistake, man: what lies around us here can slay you as surely as what spits from any howling dragon's jaws. Elves are magic, and their magic defines them. To mock is to die, swiftly ... and, just perhaps, interestingly."*

*Elminster's smile did not change. "Have my thanks again, regardless," he replied, looking around at hovering scepters and carved horn cups that bristled with as many wands as human mantle-mugs held tapers. Here and there amid the piles of beautiful things the pale fire of enchanted blades winked at him, silently beckoning. He drew in a deep breath.*

*"Well," he said, letting it out slowly as he shook his full sleeves back from his wrists. "We may as well get started."*

*The Srinshee's old face broke into a real smile then, for just a moment before she turned away to hide it.*

Elminster's visit to the Vault of Ages (the preceding paragraphs of which don't actually appear in the text) may be the only occasion during the novel *Elminster in Myth Drannor* when we see him literally knee-deep in magical items—but every chapter is laced with elven magic, for as the Srinshee said, "Elves are magic, and their magic defines them."

Far too much magic is paraded past readers to explore fully here, and some of the major and enduring magics (such as the kiira or lore-gem, and the Mythal itself) will be detailed in a forthcoming boxed set dealing with Cormanthyr at its height (450 years or so after the events of my novel).

We do, however, glimpse some magics in the pages of *Elminster in Myth Drannor* that powerful elves may use against adventurers anywhere in Faerûn, even today. Here follow a few of them. I've omitted non-elven magics used by Elminster, such as a *spell echo* and *Mystra's unraveling* (the secrets of which are revealed in "Return of the Wizards Three," which appeared in *DRAGON® Magazine* issue #238).

The student of magic should note that both mantles and spell-webs are forerunners of the fabled mythals. The curious should also be aware that some of the former, if worn or cast in particular places, can awaken the ancient fragments of mythals or other spell-webs.

## Mantles

Elves of Cormanthor employed personal "mantles" of continuous magical protection. These were centered upon a gem worn next to the skin. Upon creation, each mantle permanently "drank" 1 hit point from its caster. Thereafter, the mantle permanently "drank" another hit point at each level augmentation and yet another point (temporarily) during each day in which any power of the mantle was awakened. The focal gem could be any sort of gemstone that had been immersed in the tears of its bearer, and the mantle would function only for that being.

Cormanthan mantles varied greatly in powers and strength, depending on the magical abilities of their wearers; many mantles could call on the powers of magical items borne by their wearer, or spells memorized by them. The Coronal's mantle could even tap into the power of his thrones (the Living Seat on the isle of Estel and the Throne of the Coronal in the Chamber of the Court) and certain other sources of ancient power in the realm, such as the Vault of Ages, if these were nearby. There were highly-secret spells of the eighth and ninth levels that could augment mantles so as to have multiple powers of each level. There were also spells—some known to have been used by human mages in the waning days of Myth Drannor—that could alter the focal gem of a mantle to make it serve a new owner. One such spell is rumored to be somewhere in Candlekeep, and another recently changed hands for over a million golden lions in Skullport.

It is rumored that certain mages (Malchor Harpell is one name mentioned) and senior Harpers might even have the spells necessary to create a mantle from scratch—and there is a long-standing legend in Waterdeep that some gargoyle, drainpipe, roof minaret, or loose attic floorboard conceals the lost spellbook of the wizard Nunntchlea of Secomber, who is rumored to have cast her own mantles less than three hundred years ago. She lost her wits and lived out her last days in the alleys of the City of Splendors—and her magical accoutrements were never found.

Most sages know that the basic form of Cormanthan mantles was an invisible aura protecting the "wearer" and all items worn or held solely by him. A mantle had one automatically-functioning defensive power (or will-activated utility power) of each level, and one offensive spell of each level. Attacks and utility powers could be called forth by silent effort of will alone, attacks once per day, and utilities thrice (one mantle power can be awakened per round—and this can be accomplished in addition to spellcasting, if casting time doesn't consume the entire round).

Only the "wearer" of a mantle can modify or augment it, and thus all of its powers must be magics the wearer can personally wield. Cormanthan mantles "grew" with the increasing personal powers of their wearers, being augmented level by level as the wearer grew magically stronger (a loss of sanity or magical ability did not, however, diminish or otherwise alter existing mantle powers).

### Sample Mantles

The first is that of Nlaea, maid to the Lady Alaglossa Tornglara, whom we see briefly toward the end of the novel. Nlaea is a moon elven servant and 5th-fighter/4th-level mage, valued highly by her lady but ignored by elves of the established Houses. Her personal mantle, built level by level, is typical of that of many common Cormanthan elves, and has the following properties:

**First Level:** *unseen servant/magic missile.*
**Second Level:** *locate object/strength.*

The Lady Cilivren Doedance, whom we also see but briefly, is the matron of an important House of Cormanthor, and a 10th level fighter/11th level wizard. The powers of her mantle, level by level, are:

**First Level:** *feather fall/burning hands.*
**Second Level:** *ESP/web.*
**Third Level:** *protection from normal missiles/lightning bolt* (11d6; its efficacy has increased with her level, though it was first added to her mantle when she was of much lower level than she is when we see her).
**Four Level:** *dimension door/ice storm.*
**Fifth Level:** *major creation/cone of cold.*

The modern-day possessor of a Myth Drannan gem should always have it examined for possible mantle enchantments, and should also be aware that many Cormanthan spells that bear the same names as modern-day Faerûnian spells differ in small but often important ways from the spells later developed from them.

## Spell-Webs

One of the most striking creations of Cormanthan archmages were their great glowing spell-webs. Elminster worked on many during his apprenticeship to the Masked (before he wore the mysterious mask himself) without ever knowing the root spell that brought them into being.

Spell-webs took hours or days to weave, and were "glowing nets or interwoven cages of glowing force-lines that one could walk along as if striding along a broad wooden beam, regardless of whether one was upside down, or walking tilted sharply sideways. Multiple spells could be cast into the glowing fabric of these cages, placed in particular spots and for specific reasons, so that triggering the collapse of the web would unleash spell after spell at preset targets, in a particular order. The Master rarely revealed all of the magics he'd placed in a web before its triggering displayed their true natures, and had never shown either apprentice how to start such a web."

Spell-webs thus allowed lone mages to muster a sequence of ready (cast but "hanging") spells beyond the number they could memorize at any one time.

They also enabled a wizard to call on the skills of apprentices or even other, hired mages (without necessarily revealing to them the overall purpose or powers of a web).

Cast spells shimmered in a spell-web like small, bright cobwebs, and were always hung at junctions of the force-lines that served as the "strands" of the web. Falling through a web could disrupt it and "leak" magics from it (wasting their energy harmlessly).

A web was always fashioned with two adjacent strands ending in protruding points, with a gap between them that a mage (or a designated being, who need not have any magical abilities) could bridge with his finger. Doing so "set off" the web: "its magic snarled forth, trailing sparks as the web dissolved itself, discharging spell after spell."

A web could launch attacks at a distant foe, create a farscrying effect in which to watch the result, boil a kettle back in its caster's tower, and then whisk its creator elsewhere. Most mages erected simple webs as defenses for their towers or spell-vaults, so that an intruder would trigger a formidable series of attacks and traps. A few sought to wage war with them, or to change the realm.

## Araemyths

One of the most frightening and spectacular spells ever employed by Cormanthan archmages were the spheres known as araemyths. We see them in use by two Starym mages attacking the tower of the wizard Mythanthar: "Fingers flew and the very air around the two elves crackled and flowed, like oil sliding down the inside of a water-filled bowl. Tiny motes of light flickered here and there as the mages snatched out pinches of this and handfuls of that, and began dancing the measures of a long and intricate spell. As the twin magics unfolded, two glowing clouds of pale green radiance faded into being above the heads of the Starym—shedding enough light to show the sweat glistening on corded necks and working jaws. Then, with a silent flourish, one cloud coalesced into a sphere and began to spin. The second followed an instant later, and two globes of force hung in the air above the busy elven mages ... they were almost stumbling in haste as they plucked scepters, wands, gems, and various small and winking items out of their sashes and hurled them up into the spheres above their heads. Each item floated there, drifting lazily around among the other items in the spheres ... one of the Starym snapped out a single ringing word—or perhaps it was a name—and every item of magic in his sphere went off at once, tearing apart the very air in a darksome rift of glimmering stars that sucked in the sphere, the items, the red mist, and much of the gardens and front face of the tower before it vanished with a high sighing sound. The other Starym mage laughed in triumph before he said the word that awakened the items in his sphere. They rose, like flies disturbed from carrion on a hot day, and spat a deadly volley of bright beams into the tower—which burst apart amid deafening thunders, raining down stones all around and releasing a cloud of crimson dust as some ancient magic or other failed. The rift in the wake of these beams was small, sucking in only the items themselves and the sphere that had contained them before it vanished; no doubt this was the way the spell was supposed to work."

As far as Elminster knows, the spells that spun araemyths are now lost—but he knows full well that they may just be waiting, hidden behind the quiet eyes of elven archmages in Evermeet, Evereska, or a hundred other places in Faerûn.

He does know that *araemyth* was a ninth-level spell that required two full rounds to cast. It brought into being a sphere that could hold one magical item and/or spell (already memorized by its caster) per level of the caster. Only items or spells introduced by the caster would enter it; all others would pass through the sphere as if it didn't exist, having no effect on it or items within it. An *araemyth* transformed both spells and items (wherefore only potions, wands and other relatively minor items were customarily used) into beams of destructive force dealing 1d20 hp damage per spell level or item ability or charge, and directing them in a single volley where the caster desired (using the caster's THAC0, but multiple items could be fired in a cluster so that missing a target was almost impossible). The beams could penetrate all known substances and magical barriers, and so this spell was favored when attacking the defenses of a hostile, aroused wizard.

Some magics could destroy an *araemyth,* but it is known that a *dispel magic* spell was not one of them.

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## A Selection of Cormanthan Spells

Out of the many spectacular magics hurled past the noses of readers of *Elminster in Myth Drannor,* a bare handful of the most spectacular surviving spells of the elves appear hereafter. Elminster warns those who hunger for new magics that finding these will prove very difficult indeed.

### Body Switch

(Alteration)
Level: 8
Range: 1 mile
Components: V, S
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This spell affects the caster and a target being, or two beings (one of whom must be willing to undergo the spell, and touched by the caster). It switches the positions of one being with the other by means of a *teleport without error.* The distant being "switched" with must be a creature the caster (or the willing touched being) has physically touched at some previous time, and he or she can't be casting a spell or be under the effect of an active *globe of invulnerability* or *anti-magic shell* at the time the *body switch* is attempted, or else the *body switch* fails. The switch is literally between the spots the two beings are standing in; the caster can't divert either being (i.e., into a cell or adjacent room).

This spell gave rise to several similar human and elven magics.

### Gargajaws

(Alteration/Evocation)
Level: 8
Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 3 rounds
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: Special

This spell brings into a being a column of white fire from the cupped palms of its caster. The column wriggles like an eel straight upward for 60 feet, and there splits into three long, serpentine necks that grow huge, glowing white dragonlike maws (eyeless "clamshell" heads) at their ends. The heads shake themselves, and then stretch out their necks to bite at targets up to 80 feet distant from the junction of the necks. This process of manifestation

takes the entire round after the round of casting, but the bite attacks of the gargajaws will be the very first thing to occur at the beginning of the third round.

Gargajaw attacks have no effect on living matter, but they harm all undead, non-living, and once-living material as if a *disintegrate* spell had struck such items (a 10'-cube, of multiple items if the situation warrants, can be affected). The spell can thus be used to strip a foe of armor and weapons without actually causing the target physical harm. (It is more often used to penetrate walls or destroy buildings or restraints upon the caster's freedom; one mage once used a *gargajaws* to destroy an entire human castle armory.)

Gargajaws strike at THAC0 5, and each jaw may attack a different target. Struck items successfully saving vs. spell are undamaged, but if attacked on a later round, their saving throws are at a −1 penalty per jaw attack they have already withstood.

If a *gargajaws* spell is cast in a confined space where there is no room for the white fire to freely rise and split, only one head will be created, but every item struck by it must successfully save twice for each attack (if either save fails, *disintegration* occurs; if both saves fail, twice the normal amount of matter is affected: a cubic volume 20 feet on a side). This single *gargajaws* looks identical to any one of a triple jaws (not being larger or brighter), and any living being struck by it, or within five feet of any part of a successful "bite" attack on non-living matter, suffers impact shock damage of 1d4+1 hit points. It is not possible for the caster to deliberately choose this form of the spell in unconfined situations.

The material components of a gargajaws spell are a piece of ferrous metal, a stone, and a rod, spar, or long shard of glass. All of these may be of any size, type, or origin, and are consumed in the spellcasting.

### Lifequench

(Alteration, Necromancy)
Level: 8
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: Neg.

This perilous spell augments another magic already memorized by the *lifequench* caster, either duplicating it (it can exist indefinitely in addition to the full spell roster the caster can normally memorize) or doubling its effects (duration, area of effect, and damage). To accomplish this, the *lifequench* drains life-force from a large, old tree (or other large plant) or a creature of greater than animal intelligence (of any size, species, and age).

The living thing to be drained must be touched by the *lifequench* caster, which requires a successful attack roll if the target is free to move. It is the opening gesture of casting, so if the caster misses, the spell need not be cast and wasted. After casting occurs, however, the target receives a saving throw vs. spell. If it fails, all life is instantly drained from them. If it succeeds, the spell fails and is wasted. Such saving throws are modified as follows: +1 per hit die or level of the target being above 7; and, for plants not considered monsters, use the lifequench caster's saving throw vs. spell, making the roll at a −3 penalty.

The spellcasting process is extremely simple, but beings of good alignment risk their ethical standing by use of this magic. In Cormanthor, this spell was only to be used in direct defense of the realm or of an imperiled elven elder, by decree of the Coronal.

### Blood Dragon

(Evocation/Necromancy)
Level: 9
Range: 1 mile
Components: S, M
Duration: 6 rounds (after caster's death)
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: One target being
Saving Throw: None

This deadly spell, shared among the elder Houses of Cormanthor, is very seldom used because it requires the death of its caster. Though it is sometimes called the Doom of the Purebloods, any true elf (not half-elven) can successfully cast it. It is usually employed as a doomed elf's revenge magic.

The material components of this spell are the life-blood of its caster and a piece of the tooth of any sort of dragon.

When the spell is cast, the dragon tooth must be brought into contact with some part of the fresh-flowing blood. It vanishes and unleashes the magic: a smoke-like eruption of streaming force that rises up above the dying caster with a roar.

The force takes the shape of a silent blood-red, glistening, wingless dragon with gore-dripping jaws. It may menace its intended target (spells cannot harm it, and are absorbed by it without taking full effect), but can't actually strike until the caster dies (though beings who blunder into contact with it, or through it, will suffer its full effects at any time).

A *blood dragon* is set to attack a particular being, and will do so until the spell expires, blindly pursuing its target, but can harm all other beings it comes into contact with along the way.

It is actually a conjured cloud of corrosive venom that withers living flesh into a gray rotting mass. A *blood dragon* flows along surfaces (it can climb or descend cliffs, and cross water or fog as well as it can solid ground, but must always be in contact with a given surface) at MV 14, takes no falling damage, is AC −6, vanishes if dealt 77 hp damage, and "bites" once per round at THAC0 4.

In the first round of action, its bite deals 6d12 hp damage; in the second, 5d12; in the third, 4d12; in the fourth, 3d12; in the fifth, 2d12; and in the sixth, 1d12 hp damage.

Magical barriers (including mantles) of fifth level and above will halt a blood dragon temporarily; each "bite" it does disrupts 1d4+1 of the spell levels (or abilities) of such a barrier; when the barrier is reduced to zero, it ceases to exist and the *blood dragon* can freely attack. If the target being, or an item or being on the far side of such a barrier, bears the slightest trace of the shed blood of the caster of the *blood dragon*, the dragon can pass through the barrier as if it doesn't exist (neither barrier nor dragon affect each other in any way).

## Magical Items

Less ephemeral than cast spells are items that bear enchantments. A few that tend to see battle use have traveled widely in the Realms and still see service to this day; a selection of such useful magics follows.

### Avarphyn

The powerful, long-established families or "Houses" of Cormanthor customarily develop defensive bracers, known as *avarphyn*. These objects are customarily only for the use of the head of the house; his or her consort (the "first made" *avarphyn* is customarily in pendant form, for the use of a House matron); the heir, and the next three elves in line for succession to lordship of the House, plus any war-leader of the House who is full kin to the family.

Such bracers typically possess an armor class augmentation (typically +1 to +3; never more than +4) and an ability to glow upon demand (as in the spell *faerie fire,* either the entire surface of one or both bracers, or just the outlines of the House sigil on one or both bracers). The armor class protection operates continuously and automatically; the glow operates whenever desired, without limit.

All *avarphyn* also possess minor and major magical abilities, typically six of the former and three of the latter. The use of any major ability makes the *avarphyn* go "dead" (no powers or properties will function) for 1 full turn after usage of the ability ceases. Use of any major ability more than three times in 24 hours will allow a fourth functioning—but when it ceases, the *avarphyn* is stripped of that power permanently (barring re-enchantment).

All major and minor abilities may be used for a maximum of 1 continuous turn at a time; if this period is exceeded, the particular power ceases to function instantly, and remains "dead" for 1 full turn, though all other *avarphyn* powers may be called upon during this time.

Typical minor abilities include: *detect invisibility, feather fall, gaze reflection, knock, neutralize poison, produce flame, sending, spider climb, standfast* (the ability to ignore *repulsion* spells and other enforced retreats, and to stand up rather than falling; note that use of this power doesn't protect the user from physical damage suffered because they remain upright and where they are); *water breathing, water walk,* and *web.*

Typical major abilities include: *duodimension, fly, free action, ironguard, repulsion, reverse gravity* (centered on wearer but doesn't affect wearer), *spell turning,* and *teleport without error.*

House Echorn *avarphyn* (such as the bracers worn by Delmuth Echorn when he battled Elminster) had the following powers: an AC bonus of +2; *feather fall, fly, free action, ironguard, knock, neutralize poison, spider climb,* and *water walk* (*fly, free action,* and *ironguard* being the major abilities). Echorn was a very fertile house; several hundred pairs of such bracers survive today, though many of them are in baelnorn- or watchghost-guarded tombs.

**XP Value:** varies (typically 6,000)
**GP Value:** varies (typically 25,000)

### Storm-Sword

Perhaps the deadliest of mass-produced enchanted blades known to Cormanthans, the storm-swords are long swords typically borne only by the heads, heirs, and war-captains of powerful elven Houses. These weapons are extremely expensive to create, and their special powers can be employed only once every nine days, within a one-hour period.

A storm-sword is a *long sword +2* which protects its bearer against all lightning damage. Harmless but impressive purple lightnings play about it; when drawn, it snarls and crackles, and can pierce any known magical barrier (breaching prismatic magics one layer per blow, without dealing any harm to the storm-sword wielder).

The special power of a storm-sword is to fire *lightning bolts* (one forked bolt per round, the bolts parting 10 feet from the tip of the blade and each streaking 100 feet from that point, with each bolt dealing 9d6 hp damage to all creatures it strikes). In certain places (such as in the Chamber of the Court, or amid massed senior Cormanthan elves, with their mantles), this power is almost useless—

but on the open battlefield it can be deadly indeed.

If there is a natural or conjured storm in the sky overhead as a storm-sword is wielded, any bolts it hurls will be of double strength (9d12 hp damage).

Once a *lightning bolt* has been fired, the wielder of a storm-sword can elect to replace any future bolt with a *dimension door* power, affecting him and any creature he touches and desires to move with him.

**XP Value:** 25,000
**GP Value:** 110,000

### Wyrmtongue Scepter

Early on in the novel, Elminster encounters a scepter looted from an elven tomb. He recognizes at least one of its powers (a *backlash field*, something that Mystra herself, in her guise of Myrjala, once employed in his presence), and gains possession of it, but never has time to explore its abilities in detail.

In form, it is "a chased and fluted silver rod. One of its ends tapered into a wavering tongue like a stylized flame, and the other ended in a sky-blue gem as large as the gaping mouth of the nearest ... adventurer. In between, a slender, almost lifelike dragon curled around the barrel of the scepter, its eyes two glowing gems. One was green, and one amber—and at the tip of its curling tail was yet another gemstone, this one ale-brown in hue."

When a wielder of the scepter touches the emerald eye at the same time as the large sapphire in the butt of the scepter, the scepter's tongue emits a silent beam of white light that has no effect on living humans, but sears undead for 6d4 hp damage per strike. The beam travels in a straight line for 90 feet, but stops (not rebounding) whenever it strikes a solid object. Once 'fired,' it hangs in the air for a round, moving as the tip of the scepter is moved. It can thus readily be swung so as to strike targets, and has an effective THAC0 of 8.

Touching the faceted piece of amber that forms the scepter's other eye at the same time as the sapphire is touched produces another silent, straight beam of light from the scepter's tongue that deals 2d4+2 hp electrical damage when it hits, but it can't arc or be deflected en route as a *lightning bolt* can be (THAC0 8, three beams per round).

Touching the alestone tail-gem and the sapphire in unison causes the scepter to emit "a humming sphere of blue radiance in which small sparks danced and spun." This bright manifestation heralds the unleashing of a backlash field. The wielder of the scepter can "fire" the sphere in a straight line away from the scepter at any time after it forms. It travels at MV Fly 9, and will detonate whenever it comes into contact with any enchanted item, or the scepter-wielder wills it to burst. At that point, a spherical, 60'-radius backlash field is created, as a rapidly-fading blue radiance shot through with harmless sparks. Any magic items (but not artifacts) and magic-using beings within the field as it forms, or who enter it during the turn between its creation and dwindling to nothing, are affected by a backlash effect for 1 full day (no saving throw): any magic they unleash will have its normal effects—but also strike at them, with precisely the same force and precision (i.e. the same damage they deal, they also receive).

Only one scepter power can be unleashed per round, and the backlash field can only be created twice in every 24-hour period (attempts to use it more often carry no penalty, but simply fail).

Like the majority of Cormanthan scepters, *wyrmtongue scepters* can be willed to float motionless in midair when released by their wielder (a scepter of unknown type was recently spotted hovering 60 feet off the ground in a certain glade near the ruins of Myth Drannor—but it seems well-guarded by monsters waiting to dine on adventurers who approach).

Several dozen of these scepters were made, and employed by the High Court Mages of Cormanthor or agents they designated, to deal with hostile wizards (both intruders and traitors within the realm). One scepter is said to lie hidden somewhere in the Royal Palace in Suzail, in present-day Cormyr.

**XP Value:** 50,000
**GP Value:** 225,000

## Treasures Yet Unseen

Many of the items Elminster examined in the Vault of Ages haven't been seen since the fall of Myth Drannor and may yet lie in the dark depths of that subterranean storehouse.

In the brief time he searched amid the treasures (some 20 years or so before the creation of the Mythal) the Srinshee identified items (considered "old" by the elves then) such as the Crown of Darshee, which enables its wearers to appear as they had done when younger; Olinsivver's Gage, a glove that could resculpt the skin of battered or marred faces with its fingertips; Raeranthur's Cloak, which banishes blight from trees whose trunks it is wrapped around, or plants it is draped over; the Dowsing Eye of House Clatharla, a clear crystal sphere through which one can see the course of waterflows, on the surface or underground; every handspan of their travel clearly lit to display "beaver-dams and snags and sources of foulness;" and Liluth's *Summertongue*, a magical *long sword +3* that banishes magical darkness, and destroys the undead known as shadows at a touch (it also deals triple damage to wraiths, spectres, ghosts, watchghosts, vampires in gaseous form, and all other non-corporeal undead).

The elves of Cormanthor loved magic, and even a jelly pot or boot-horn might bear its enchantment. It will also, of course, be a thing of beauty, for one could not be an elf of fair Cormanthor and not craft things that human eyes find beautiful. Thousands of enchanted things made by elven hands in the city that became Myth Drannor might yet come to light from hiding-places all over Faerûn. Watch for them; beware them ... and cherish them. From realm to realm across fair Toril, we shall not see their like again.

*Ed Greenwood has just returned from a visit to the Realms full of wise sayings. He tells us that the latest catch-phrase among adventurers is "The best adventures all seem to involve falling down stairs." This saying has spread like misused spellfire and now threatens to overshadow such perennial favorites as "Quick, Agnes—check the map!" (to be uttered while falling, of course) and "Use the spell, fool!"*

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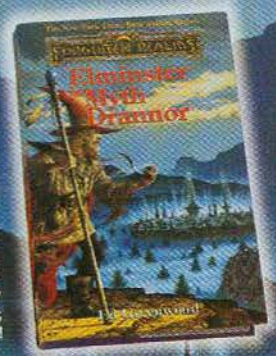


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GREYHAWK® ADVENTURES

# Founding Greyhawk

## The Creation and Development of the Greyhawk® Campaign, 1972–75

by Gary Gygax

It was late in the year 1972, near the start of winter. Wisconsin then is cold and dreary, but all the current local regulars of the Lake Geneva Tactical Studies Association, meeting at my house, were as cheerful as if the finest spring weather were at hand. For some time the club had pretty much dropped historical wargaming for playing the Chainmail™ game. Now they were about to launch into an altogether different variety of fantasy gaming, and the enthusiasm was unbounded. They knew their stuff on the tabletop, understood the combat system and magic, recognized the monsters, but had yet to venture into the subterranean depths of a castle dungeon. So, waiting with impatience for me to finish were the stalwarts Don Kaye, Rob and Terry Kuntz, Ernie Gygax, and newly interested Elisé Gygax. A mere handful that would in a few months swell into ten times that number.

### Model Castle to Greyhawk Dungeons

Late the night before I had gone down into the basement, measured out my tabletop gaming model of "Castle Bodenstadt," and from those measurements plotted out a draft of castle ruins. Most unsatisfactory! The darn castle didn't mesh well at all with the scale of the sheets of graph paper I was going to use. The castle was square, and I fully intended to use every bit of the rectangular paper that would map the underground mazes I had outlined in name, and thus in vague form. The ruined upper works were secondary stuff anyway, so I just elongated a couple of curtain walls, and solved the "problem." In this first incarnation, Castle Greyhawk was to have no substantial above-ground presence. A few rats and minor bandit nuisances only, with entrances to the real adventure area below hidden by rubble, so the "upper works" received short shrift. Entrances here, here, and there. Four minor encounter areas, and a pit area where an adventurer of incautious sort might slide down and take damage, but possibly find another hidden entrance to the first level. All done!

There were to be nine exploration levels when the dungeon construction was finished. I had listed names that went something like this: #1 Barracks, #2 Storerooms, #3 Cells, #4 Torture Chambers, #5 Maze, #6 Labyrinth, #7 Catacombs, #8 Crypts, #9 Arena, and an "Invisible Monster" bottom level where the triumphant heroes would receive their reward and next adventure, as it were. More about that later on. At the time under consideration, the first level only had been drafted.

That drawing took up all my spare time during the following day. It was a level that had lots of corridors and rooms, few squares penciled in to indicate solid stone. There were, however, only about 20 encounters on it, for I was truly a novice Dungeon Master and quite unprepared for the avid plundering that was about to begin. Closeted in my little study at 330 Center Street in Lake Geneva, I hastily completed sketchy notes on the monsters and treasure to be found there on level one of the dungeons of Castle Greyhawk, while the assembled players waited impatiently at the dining room table.

A word about the naming of the castle and campaign. It was done for Chief Blackhawk, the Indian leader of the Fox and Sauk tribes in the Illinois-Wisconsin area in the mid-1800. As an amateur historian, I was much interested in the Native Americans, and I always felt that Blackhawk was a brave and tragic example of the fate of the original inhabitants of the continent. I envisioned a fantasy world setting where the main city would be in a location similar to that of Chicago, a port city on a great lake, on a continent similar in form to North America, and the world generally vague but something like the actual earth. But I didn't want the players to know that general formulation, so "Greyhawk" served the purpose without giving away the show, so to speak, or misleading the group either. After all, this was to be a fantastic world of magic and monsters, a medieval sort of place not anything at all like North America at anytime in regards to culture and society. That explained, let us return to the first adventure.

### The First Bold Adventurers

Early evening, and the first adventurers to explore the ruins of Greyhawk Castle set forth. All were humans. Rob and Terry were the fighters Robilar and Terrik, Don and Ernie were the magic-users Murlynd and Tenser, Elisé was a cleric, but I have lost her 3" × 5" index card with the character stats, and I cannot recall the name she chose. The group slew a few rats, found stairs leading down, and entered the dungeon with torches flaring. What was that noise? (Early on I used a lot of illusionary sounds in the dungeons but found in the long run they helped, not hindered the PCs, so out they went!) Anyway, all were tense,

edgy, and wide eyed. No surprises, a pit avoided, much exploring and mapping, and—amongst other denizens of the dark underground trashed—a group of kobolds decimated and sent fleeing, and a great treasure chest full of copper pieces hauled out. Great disappointment that, for they had deemed it the best of the loot, and 'twas but a trifle.

A few hours later, with loot counted and divvied up, experience points awarded, and planning for the next expedition completed, the players turned on me! "So when is the next adventure?" I suggested that a couple of days later would be best, because I wanted to get another level finished and—"Tomorrow!" and "Yes, tomorrow!" After some grumbling from Don, who had a regular job and couldn't make it, the others browbeat me into an afternoon adventure session. So when I had seen some out and others off to bed, I went back to the study and went to work on adding a few more encounters to level one and roughed out level two. The characters had come dangerously near a flight of stairs leading down, and there was, of course, no lower level at the bottom of those stairs. The level finished, but lacking encounters, I crashed on the studio couch around 2:00 A.M., or so to get a few hours sleep. As with Don, I had to get some work done that day before resuming important things like playing the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game.

I had earlier put together a list of names I thought would suit the game. Then I polled my kids. My youngest daughter, Cindy, was champion of the name noted, and I, loving alliteration, agreed. So with the first adventure went the now-famous name, DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, which the group instantly abbreviated to D&D. The third D&D adventure would follow close on the heels of the second, as Don Kaye showed up in the evening, and others happily joined in hunger for excitement, loot, and the ever-desirable experience points. An ogre lurking in the shadows of the second level sent the troops hastening back from a descent to lower depths. More night work followed for the next couple of weeks as I hastened to create the fullness of Castle Greyhawk.

In a relatively short time, I managed the task. It followed the general plan stated above, and the group, increasing by a couple of players every week or so, roamed and romped joyfully through the levels. Although I increased the strength and numbers of the monsters, the frequency and deadliness of tricks and traps, as the levels descended, the skill of play and arsenal of weapons more than kept pace with my Dungeon Masterly impediments to progress. Because they were seemingly always present and ready for another go at it, and very able players too, Rob, Ernie, and to a slightly lesser extent Terry, soon had the highest-level PCs. After some truly memorable adventures on ever-deeper levels, a recounting of which would be inappropriate herein, save for one I can not resist telling, those three managed to attain the then-bottom-most of the dungeons beneath the castle.

### Monte Haul Prime!

A short digression to relate the tale I call "The Sack of the Sixth Level." This level was a labyrinth with a lot of wereboars and other shape-shifting creatures lurking around. To the east were several large open areas, all alike of course, and on the western faces of the seemingly solid areas of stone forming these big chambers were secret doors. These accessed six secret rooms. These hidden places were filled with gold, jewels, scrolls, potions, other magical items, and enchanted weapons. All save two, that is. The second and fourth of these six secret chambers held a mated pair of the oldest and largest black dragons held in stasis, freed when the secret door was opened, that act also triggering a lowering of a large wall section for the good dragon to exit.

Well, soon enough Tenser, Robilar, and Terrik found the level. They slew some of the wereboars, did this and that, but kept coming back to the larger chambers in the east. Ernie, for no discernable reason other than his own hunches, had Tenser search for secret doors in exactly the right area, and all too quickly found the monetary treasure chamber. Such looting! They brought back lower level PCs a second time so as to clean it out to the last copper! As might be expected, these three villains then began checking elsewhere, figuring similar locations might have similar secret entrances—which I had foolishly done. So, one by one, the other four hordes of treasure were discovered and looted. How they managed to miss the two dragons I could not understand, and I was forced to grin and bear it, being a fair DM, fairly outwitted. Revenge was at hand!

Greed overcame caution, so one day the three, with a train of henchmen to assist, went back to the sixth level well once too often. They opened the cell of the female black dragon, saw what they had done, and ran off at highest speed, losing her in the labyrinth and escaping unharmed. Not satisfied, certain that more heaps of wealth awaited, they snuck back, thought to open "her" hidden den, made a really big location error, and instead activated the secret door that triggered the male black dragon's release. Out it roared, itching to slay after its incarceration. A distant response indicated that its mate had heard and was coming. The adventurers were desperate. The male dragon spat, and the PCs struck to subdue. A few hirelings died, the others suffered damage, and the dragon took its lumps to the tune of about 40% of its hit points. The percentile dice rolled out, and the score was over 50! The players groaned, the acid flew, their characters bashed back. Everyone concerned was sorely battered now, but the black dragon had suffered over 80% damage. Surely it would now roll over and beg for mercy. Again come the dice, and the score is over 90! The PCs fled with the dragon in pursuit. Robilar, bringing up the rear, was inspired to grab a gargoyle he had forced into his service and toss it on his back in a sort of fireman's carry.

For the third time the great black dragon belched forth its acid stream, and fortunately for Robilar, the gargoyle took the brunt of that attack. It was changed to a mess running off his armor as Robilar managed to round a corner and head for safety. They had discovered previously that there was a shaft that went upwards of several hundred feet in the far eastern portion of the level. With his *boots of levitation*, the fleeing fighter could easily ascend this small space, leaving any pursuit behind.

Because the reunited pair would take time out to greet each other, I had allowed the whole party to evade pursuit. Robilar, separated from the others, would have the first check for a random wandering monster, of course, seeing as how there had been considerable commotion. The result was positive, and the dice couldn't have been better. A purple worm was indicated, and it could be only one place ... coming down the shaft! So Robilar "deflated" his boots, dropped and ran for his life, right back into view of the black dragons, naturally.

Both spat, missed, and took up pursuit. In his haste to allow his character to escape, Rob forgot that the passageway

down which he said Robilar was fleeing happened to be the very one in which a large black pudding had taken up residence in a depression in the floor. It ate those *boots of levitation* off his feet as Robilar ran across, and delivered sufficient additional damage to put the poor fighter near his end.

It wasn't the end, for the evasive action worked, and Robilar soon rejoined the others, who had encountered no additional monsters to deal with. Battered, *sans* a fair amount of magical items and equipment, and without any loot, the survivors beat their hasty retreat. Thereafter, they avoided the former "Labyrinth I," for it had become "The Black Dragon Level." A couple of additional forays were made, but the dragons were tough [lucky dice too], and had no discernable treasure, so for years thereafter the pair ruled supreme there. However, in the previous looting, the three discoverers went up a couple of levels each, and some of the other players' PCs managed to gain a level also, from which lesson I learned never to have so much treasure so unguarded.

## Down and Out

With malice aforethought, I had put in a series of long, slanting passages that took the unwary characters to lower levels unbeknownst to the player. Rob, playing solo with fighter Robilar, went exploring and without meaning to followed these ways right down to the lowest level of Castle Greyhawk. There, invisible stalkers and other minions of the secret master of the castle herded him to the center, where a magically enabled "slide" carried Robilar down through the earth and out again on the other side of the world, exiting in a strange temple in a land very much like Cathay (China), where nobody could understand him, and from whence he would have to adventure his way back to Greyhawk over land and sea. Before being launched, though, as a fighter Robilar had found *+3 armor, shield,* and *sword*; and as he careened down that chute to elsewhere he saw none other than Zagyg the Mad Archmage waving bye-bye to him from a *sphere of force* above, granting by that gesture one whole experience level to Robilar for his accomplishment.

Later that day, Ernie as Tenser, of course, sought for Robilar to go adventuring with him. In the campaign it was the next day, as I did not equate real time with game time. I informed him that he was nowhere to be found, but through inquiry of Robilar's henchmen, Tenser discovered that the one he sought had earlier set out to explore the lower levels of the castle. Robilar's associates—Rob now had a handful of other PCs—were worried, I informed Tenser. Without hesitation, Tenser went to see whether he could find his comrade. Other DMs can attest to the fact that players manage strange feats indeed for their PCs. Ernie somehow, after a couple of hours wandering off into other areas, had Tenser follow the route taken by Robilar. He received magical items akin to the +3 goodies gained by his forerunner, and then Tenser too was shaking his head in strange land, pondering what to do next.

And what of Terry Kuntz and Terrik? You guessed it. Not long after, and I kept my eyes glued to the pair who had already "graduated" to see that they made no sign nor signal, the fighter too delved into the lowest levels of Greyhawk Castle bent on finding and rescuing his missing fellows—or, at worst, bringing their corpses back in hopes of being restored to life again. Instead, a third PC in succession, and with no help from his comrades, attained the distinction of "falling clear through to China."

There were now three high-level (11th to 12th, as I recall) PCs in the campaign, safely returned after separate harrowing outdoor adventures, and quite able to tell others of what occurred. Furthermore, Don Kaye's magic-user was only a couple of levels behind those three, and a couple of other regulars had risen nearly as high. With a really large group of lesser-level PCs, ranging from meager 1st and 2nd to strong 5th and 6th, it was time to reconsider the whole dungeon. Before going into that, I will digress to discuss the community in which the PCs dwelt and adventured.

## City Sketch to Sketchy City

Immediately after the initial adventure, I realized I had overlooked detailing the place where equipment was purchased, lodgings kept, and so forth. To manage for the time, I "fudged" a city, making notes and a line map as I went along. From this came a single sheet of graph paper with a walled city. The crooked streets were mostly unnamed. Blocks of buildings were mostly filled in in the dull gray of pencil marking. Only the major points were indicated. These were done in various shades of colored pencil. Red was an arms dealer, green an inn, blue a tavern, brown a merchant, yellow a money changer, and so on. Such places, and a handful of guilds, temples, other public buildings, frequented streets and byways, and notable places were eventually named, as discovered by exploring PCs and hastily given such identity by the DM. With more players continually joining the campaign, the map was overwhelmed with scribblings and notations. Thus the City of Greyhawk had to grow.

I quadrupled the map. The City of Greyhawk now filled four sheets of graph paper, one for each city quadrant, with slums and thieves quarter, merchants quarter and high, and a citadel area now clearly show. Various temples and wizards' dwellings also became major features at this time. Nonetheless, much of the map remained dark blocks of unnamed buildings on like arteries. Crooked alleys, lanes, and angling streets were mostly nameless, save by their identity as "the way to the Green Dragon Inn" or "the close that encircles the wizard's tower."

This form was reasonably satisfactory for me as constant DM, as with notation and notes, I could keep from major gaffes in handling the bands of PCs seeking adventures in the city. It was just after creating the map that the group grew so large that I could not properly manage it, so I asked Rob Kuntz to join me as a co-DM. He agreed. This brings us to a time in mid-1974, when the D&D game had been available commercially for about six months. The three top players, already mentioned, had "beaten" Castle Greyhawk, and I needed to do major revisions not only on the castle but also to the rules.

## New Castle, Bigger Dungeons

The castle comes first. Because of the number of new players coming to each adventure session, the initial level of Greyhawk Castle had to be much enlarged. Using a couple of sheets of 17" × 22" graph paper, I drafted a complete, mostly undamaged castle above ground. It had multiple levels, and a lot of encounters, the higher up, the more dangerous. Then, using the same sort of paper I drew a new first level that could accommodate both bands of fledgling adventures and the initiated. Four separate descent areas were created with designation by the cardinal directions. Each had multiple flights of stairways leading lower, some ending several levels

farther down. Three were "guarded" by dungeon denizens—elves, dwarves, a very large and strong ogre. One descent area only, that most difficult to find, was deserted and free of "charge" by some guardian. The vast majority of the space, however, was filled with passages, chambers, and rooms. The inhabitants there awaited encounter with the neophytes just learning the basics of dungeoneering. So the fledglings sought their fortunes there, while the veterans ignored such trivial stuff and headed straight for the depths where the big treasures could be found.

As was indicated in the Gord short story, "Heart of Darkness," Castle Greyhawk indeed had a fifth descent area. In the very center of the first level, where most explorers entered via the circular stone steps there, was a hard-to-discover secret entrance to the continuation of that spiral stairway. It went down all the way to the ninth level, with some side exits along the route accessing some intermediate levels not generally accessible save from this shaft. This was the route taken by the very strongest of the PCs, naturally.

The side entrances to the second and lower dungeon levels were basically insular. That is, each led to a series of seven lower levels that were distinct, so that there was North #2 through #8, East #2 through #8, South #2 through #8, and West #2 through #8. Again, plenty of space for progressing PCs to adventure and gain experience. These sets of levels had few inter-connections, save at the very bottom, where each eighth level had a connection down to the ninth, central, level.

From nine on, the levels of Castle Greyhawk progressed straight down for another dozen or so tiers. with mostly cave and cavern areas featured, because large monsters with long-range weapons need space in which to operate. Not surprisingly, a number of these levels also had magical transportation places that sent PCs off to distant lands, other dimensions, strange worlds, or different times. (The general design served so well that I have recently used it as the basis for a new set of dungeon levels I am currently in process of creating for a new fantasy role-playing game.)

## Dungeon Construction and City Planning

To manage all of this new construction, a cannibalization of my original dungeon, and Rob Kuntz's, gave about half of the needed material beneath the expanded new first level. To complete the gigantic new dungeon plan, I cut back to about half of my usual Dungeon Mastering time, and Rob doubled his. In relatively short order, the "new and improved" Castle Greyhawk came into being before the year's end. What a joy for all!

But that didn't mean I was now able to get back to the fun of DMing. In the course of all that really intensive play, I had found a lot needed to be done for the D&D game, so I began to write the manuscript for the GREYHAWK supplement. Having myself adventured mainly in Rob's campaign, a lot of the ideas I now wanted to put on paper came from him, so we agreed on a co-authorship of the work. Because I had, in fact, previously begun compiling material from about the time the original game was released, something over half of the content was mine, but Rob's contribution was indeed considerable. So, again, I took a back seat in DMing to Rob while writing the work.

When it was finally done, I found that there was no problem in picking up the castle, but when city adventuring was the order of the day it was pretty difficult to follow what Rob had been doing there. Thus I determined to do a really big map of the City of Greyhawk, in a scale small enough to allow writing in the names of arteries, building number identifiers, and all the like. Out came the big sheets of graph paper, the rulers and pencils, and work commenced. It was a project that was never to see final completion for a multitude of reasons. First, the map was so large that it covered the whole playing table, and that was a good-sized one indeed, able to accommodate a dozen or more players with the DM having an end for himself. Second, it demanded so much time and effort of detail it wasn't worth it. Third, PC activity in the city made the setting change unexpectedly. Fourth, to use the new map meant it had to be completed properly and then folded or cut into manageable, concealable portions. Fifth, we weren't doing the fourth, and play went on apace in the old version of the city, thus altering the yet unfinished new one. Sixth, we (and here I must properly say I) gave up. Outside of the "Odd Alley/Strangeways" area and a couple of others depicted on the big map, we went back to the four-sheet, general version and remained with it for most City of Greyhawk adventuring.

## The Complete Milieu with Room to Grow

This brings us nicely to the end of the time period indicated, the year 1975. As of then, both Castle Greyhawk and the City of Greyhawk were formed into the shape they retained in the campaign run by myself and Rob Kuntz for many years to come. To accommodate my play of Mordenkainen, Yrag, Bigby *et al*, and the rest of the crew with very powerful PCs, Rob began a second series of adventuring areas, outdoors and subterranean as well. One of these areas is described in the module WG5 *Mordenkainen's Fantastic Adventure.* Similarly, I too did separate areas for Rob's PCs and the other top regulars, and many of these were published by TSR, Inc. The one least popular with the Greyhawk Campaign players was *Isle of the Ape*, very nearly the most beloved by me as the DM.

Do I have the original material written about above? Well, most, if not all of it. The original one-page map of the city might have gone missing, but I think I can find the rest. As for the castle dungeons, of course! The main problem is that the lot is in typical DM form, quite suitable for the campaign's directors to manage when immersed in the action, but rather cryptic now after all these years. Hundreds of different players with yet more PCs adventured in city and castle, blasted buildings, created constructions, wiped out walls, closed passages, created new ones, trashed monsters, brought in others, and who can say what else!

Battered and now-neglected, these first two campaign creations remain as legends of the D&D game, and I am proud to say they brought as much enjoyment to so many others as they did to me.

*Gary Gygax became active in role-playing games when he authored the D&D® game as its co-creator. He later created the AD&D® game and many D&D and AD&D modules and accessories, including the GREYHAWK setting. He is the author of numerous novels, short stories, and even more magazine articles, mostly dealing with gaming.*

# Fox of the Planes

## Night Hags, their Wares, and their Servants

by Ed Bonny

illustrated by Tony DiTerlizzi

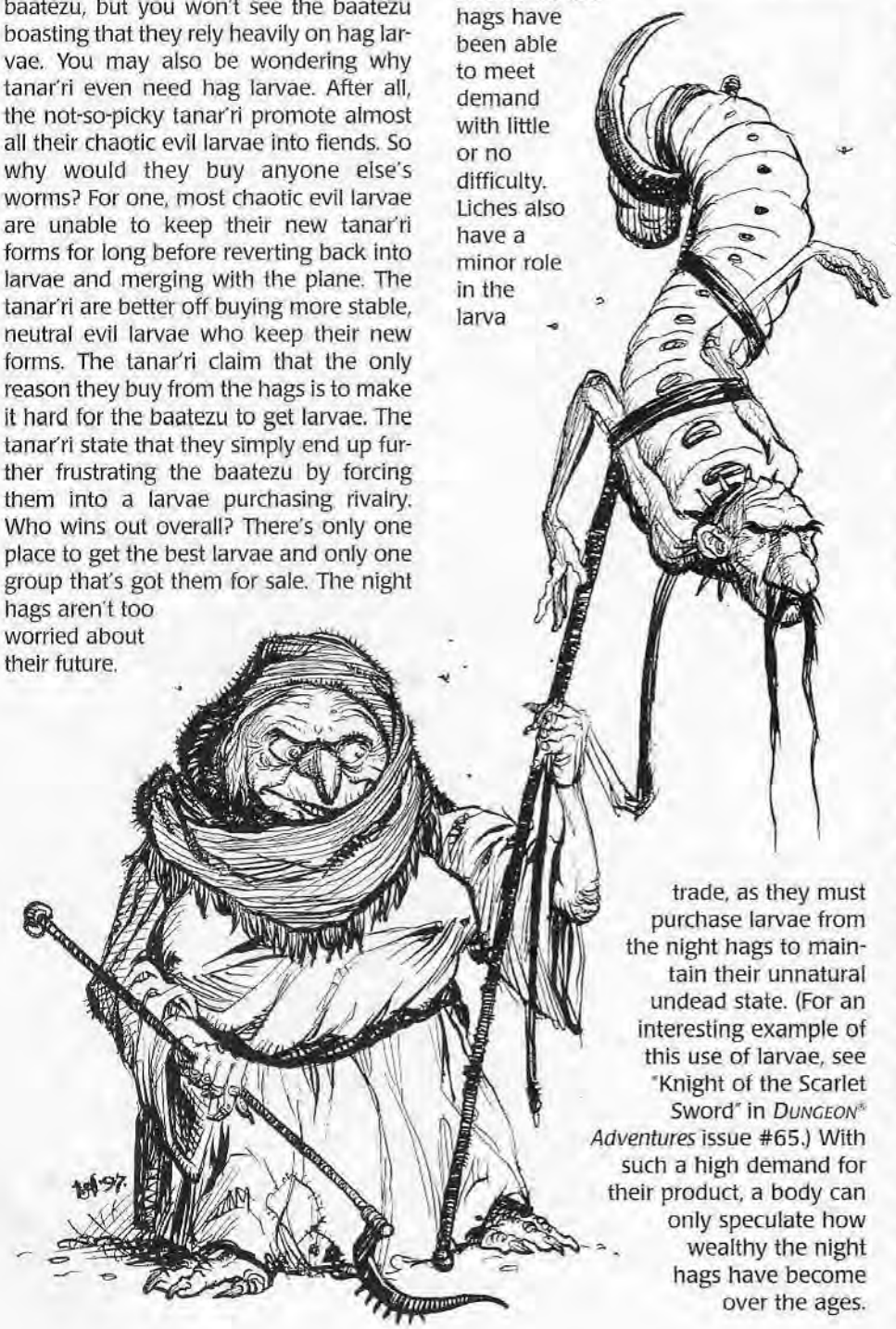
Ask most planar folk what they think about night hags, and you'll hear pretty much the same answer: "A crafty bunch of evil old crones." Who else are better suited to snatch up larvae and sell the stinking worms for a tidy bit of jink? Talk to the celestials, and they'll tell you they hate hags because "hags're the villains who perpetuate the foul races of the Lower Planes by bartering larvae to the fiends." Fiends think a little more kindly of hags, because there's no one better at delivering quality larvae. The night hags don't care much of what anyone thinks of them. As long as they continue to acquire knowledge, wealth and ultimately greater personal power with the selling of larvae, nothing else really matters. The mistresses of the Grey Waste sit secure in the comfort that ruling the Larva Trade means ruling the plane.

Scholars who study the Lower Planes have wondered why no one has ever sought to control the Gray Waste as others have on Baatezu or some layers of the Abyss. To date, not one infernal fiend-lord has risen up to claim the Gray Waste for its own. Some say it's the despairing, will-sapping effect of the Waste that stops anyone from even wanting to try to conquer it, but that's just not true. Fact is, the night hags rule the Gray Waste, but they don't rule by any obvious show of force. Hags are more careful, controlling this gloomy plane via their skillful manipulation of the larva trade. You see, by playing the various factions in the Blood War off each other, the hags have secured their position as the planar rulers of the Gray Waste.

Sure, larvae can be found on all the lower planes, but for some reason they aren't as purely evil as the ones found on the Gray Waste. The baatezu don't care much for Baatorian larvae. Sure, the plane is lawful evil, but that's the whole problem. Larvae from Baator are just too rigid, too difficult to control—no doubt tainted by the Prime version of lawful evil. Most don't seem to adapt well to the baatezu's promotion process, so the baatezu are forced to buy more flexible, "purely" evil larvae from the night hags. Seems neutral evil larvae make the best baatezu, but you won't see the baatezu boasting that they rely heavily on hag larvae. You may also be wondering why tanar'ri even need hag larvae. After all, the not-so-picky tanar'ri promote almost all their chaotic evil larvae into fiends. So why would they buy anyone else's worms? For one, most chaotic evil larvae are unable to keep their new tanar'ri forms for long before reverting back into larvae and merging with the plane. The tanar'ri are better off buying more stable, neutral evil larvae who keep their new forms. The tanar'ri claim that the only reason they buy from the hags is to make it hard for the baatezu to get larvae. The tanar'ri state that they simply end up further frustrating the baatezu by forcing them into a larvae purchasing rivalry. Who wins out overall? There's only one place to get the best larvae and only one group that's got them for sale. The night hags aren't too worried about their future.

## The Larva Trade

It is no secret why larvae are the most sought-after commodity in the Lower Planes. Larvae serve as the base stock from which most fiends are generated. They are truly the foundation for much of the populations of the Lower Planes. With sometimes millions of fiends slain daily in the Blood War, the baatezu and tanar'ri continually require large quantities of larvae to rebuild their armies. As the millennia pass, the fiends keep asking for more and more larvae, and so far the hags have been able to meet demand with little or no difficulty. Liches also have a minor role in the larva trade, as they must purchase larvae from the night hags to maintain their unnatural undead state. (For an interesting example of this use of larvae, see "Knight of the Scarlet Sword" in *Dungeon® Adventures* issue #65.) With such a high demand for their product, a body can only speculate how wealthy the night hags have become over the ages.



The larva trade is the sole occupation for most hags, and it consumes much of their time and attention. Larvae are gathered from across the blasted plains of the Gray Waste and sold either by a pre-arranged contract or openly to the highest bidder. On any given day, thousands of small "one-hag" markets can be found scattered throughout the planes, but none can compare with the Grand Larva Emporium located on Oinos.

The Emporium is the grandest bazaar where baatezu and tanar'ri rub elbows with liches to purchase the finest larvae in all the planes. It is said that the Emporium is where future pit fiends and balors can be found, and where one needs a discriminating eye to make that successful purchase. Ideally situated along the River Styx, the Grand Larva Emporium is—without a doubt—the commercial center of the Lower Planes. Overseen by perhaps the longest-surviving hag covey, the market is a daily bustle of hags and their varied clientele arguing over prices and quality. Hags bring in their herds and pay the covey a day's rent for a place in the market. Marraenoloth skiffs arrive by the hundreds to discharge passengers who've come to shop or browse for the day. A well-armed (and probably well-paid) force of yugoloth mercenaries keeps the peace here. Bashers disrupting trade are immediately executed—no questions asked.

The Emporium boasts a wide-variety of larva by-products, including a distilled larva liqueur commonly called "Yellow Wurm Stout" as well as an aromatic larva perfume for the selective female fiend known simply as "Evil." Larva is not the only commodity sold there—it is rumored that one can purchase Blood War weapons and armor, dark magics, slaves, and all sorts of contraband. There's even a coffee house the size of a small Prime town known as The Blood Grind, run by the tiefling Malraxus, who claims to brew the best Abyssal coffee this side of Carceri. Visitors to the Grind can order a hot pot of black coffee, invite over a "friendly" fiend to share in a steaming mug and catch up on the latest news on the Blood War—provided the fiend is willing to talk.

Outside of the Emporium, night hags prefer to act as lone operatives when marketing their larvae. Not only does this free them from dealing with their troublesome sisters, but this way, a hag can keep all the jink for herself. A handful of "larva cooperatives" can always be

found throughout the Waste, where coveys of hags temporarily work together for a greater, combined profit. These arrangements inevitably fall apart after a short time because of in-fighting among the sisters. Hags often employ lesser beings such as mephits, imps, tieflings, and sometimes even a modron to perform the minor but necessary day-to-day tasks of book-keeping, larvae herding, and message-delivery. Loyal servants are always sought after but very often poorly paid (if paid at all). Servants seeking to terminate their employment with a hag are more often than not written into the dead-book. Night hags dislike seeing their employees leave. The hags prefer to keep their trade secrets inside the family business.

Night hags harvest larvae in one of two ways. The easiest method is to wander the expanses of the Gray Waste searching for the wriggling things. The typical hag sets out with her servants gathering larvae, branding them, and adding the sickly, liquid slugs to her herd. An odd phenomenon about larvae on Oinos is that new larvae tend to materialize spontaneously near or within large numbers of their wormy brethren. For some unknown reason, larvae rarely appear singly. Hags try to take advantage of this apparently natural occurrence by keeping several large herds around for extended periods. It is not uncommon for a herd of larvae to double in size every few days simply because of this "attraction factor." Poor quality larvae are weeded out to be destroyed or sold at a discount, usually to clueless liches.

Extremely opportunistic hags are known to travel ethereally to worlds on the Prime to seek out wholly evil mortals. When an evil Prime is located, the hag tortures the Prime while he sleeps, persisting until he dies. The hag then seizes the fleeing Prime's evil spirit and retreats back to the Waste, where the victim is turned into a special kind of larva more powerful and evil than ordinary larvae. It is rumored that these special larvae are always transformed directly into lesser fiends by baatezu and tanar'ri rather than having them start off their fiendish existence as mindless lemures and manes. For this obvious reason, fiends actively seek out hags who collect these precious larvae. While extremely profitable for night hags, the significant effort that goes into acquiring an evil spirit in this manner discourages most hags from this practice. It is also a fact that traveling to the Prime tends to attract the attention of annoying Prime heroes, who often end up causing more trouble for the hag than what the special larva is worth.

When selling larvae, hags alone set the market prices, and they seek payment primarily in the form of gold or vital information. They've also been seen bartering for magical items, future favors, or even a customer's own spirit, provided it comes from a really evil sort. All this puts the hags in a better position to have things their way, whether it is to blackmail a poor berk they've got the dark on or to sell some acquired Blood War battle plans to one side or the other.

SO YOU THINK
HE MIGHT STOP IN
TO SAY 'ELLO ONCE IN A WHILE?

**NO!** WHY HE DON'T EVEN BUY ME **LARVAE** ANYMORE!
AND AFTER ALL I'VE **DONE** FOR HIM,

WHY THAT'S **GRATITUDE** FOR YOU!

**— AN EMPORIUM HAG, VOMISS, COMPLAINING ABOUT EX-CUSTOMER GRAZZT**

## Trade Disruptions

Primes have, of course, good reason to be terrified of night hags. They are pretty nasty witches. However by planar standards, hags are not an overly strong race. Even with their impressive immunities and magic resistance, night hags possess a mere 8 Hit Dice and a relatively poor Armor Class (AC 0). Their few offensive spells would have difficulty overcoming most fiends' magic resistance. And it's no secret that a lone hag could easily be overwhelmed in battle by a handful of mezzoloths or other similarly powered fiends. It's a wonder then that some force for good or evil hasn't come along already and kicked the hags out of the Gray Waste permanently.

Over the years, various special interest groups have sought to disrupt the larva trade or commandeer it for their own greedy purposes. Trade interruptions are not common on the Waste but when they occur, they can have dire repercussions throughout the entire Lower Planes. Fiends get more than a bit edgy should their precious larva supply appear to be drying up.

**Blood War:** By and large, the greatest disruption to the larva trade is the Blood War. Every day, fiendish armies rage across the surface of the Gray Waste, destroying everything in their path. The hags try to discover where the next skirmish is expected and then avoid that area. But given the unexpected nature of war, it often happens that a battle will tumble across a hag holding market, killing both the hag and her larvae as well as all her customers.

**Entrepreneurs:** Whenever there's jink to be made, there's bound to be cutters out there who want a cut of the profits. Larva entrepreneurs appear from time to time, seeking to get a chunk of the larva trade for themselves. They never seem to survive for very long though. Sometimes a rogue fiend grows tired of fighting in the Blood War and decides he wants to profit off it instead. Both prime and planar mortals have tried to get in on the act. No one ever takes any of them too seriously. They're usually written into the dead-book before they complete their first deal. (The hags come down real hard on these berks.) It's anyone's guess as to what fools out there will try their hand at the larva trade next but lately members of the Merkant sect have been seen studying up on hags and asking all sorts of questions about larvae. Makes a body wonder, doesn't it?

**Celestial Crusaders:** Celestials are always figuring out ways to weaken fiends without drawing any unwanted attention to themselves. Some celestials figure that it's best to deal with fiends when they start out as "weak worms" rather than fight them after they've been promoted into more powerful fiends. These celestials conduct covert military strikes against the hags targeting both larvae and hags, in the hopes of eventually reducing the total fiend population. It seems to make sense at first, but no one can prove yet if the celestials' efforts are having any real effect except maybe to stir up the night hags' wrath.

**Minor Intrusions:** Less serious interruptions to the larva trade also occur on a regular basis and often without

warning. Larva-rustling liches may ambush a hag, steal her herd, and then flee through a portal with their ill-gotten booty. Sometimes a party of good adventurers stumbles across a hag deciding it would be best to put the foul crone out of business permanently. These minor attacks and thefts usually disturb only a single night hag. Rarely do they disrupt the larva trade on any noticeable scale. Hags that fail to properly address these lesser threats are scorned by their sisters for being weak and inept.

## Altraloths: Champions of the Night Hags

There are rare times in the long history of the night hags when they are faced with so desperate a situation or such a dire threat that either singly or united, they cannot overcome it. During these extreme times, night hags may form an unusually cooperative covey in order to create a champion to deal with these threats. The champion is always a fiend of the hags' choosing, whom they enhance via an arcane ritual. A champion is always taken from only one type of fiend—yugoloth. Whether other fiends can be substituted in the process is unknown.

No one knows the dark as to just how hags tumbled onto the magical recipe of transforming yugoloths into super-fiends. Some say that the hags' goddess, Cegilune, developed it to give her followers another tool to maintain their dominance in the Waste. A Sigilian historian points to the existence of the gehelreths and reports that the mysterious baernaloths were once looking for ways to improve yugoloth stock much the way Apomps did. No one puts much faith in these tales, since everyone knows that Cegilune could care less for her hags' welfare and that baernaloths don't seem to have much to do with the yugoloths anymore. More likely, a covey of quick-witted night hags were caught in a serious situation and came up with the idea of a fiendish champion on their own. Whatever the truth is, the hags won't tell and the yugoloths don't even speak of it. They want the whole thing kept in the dark and for good reason. There's a secret involved that no hag ever wants the multiverse to know. The process is extremely *enervating* for the night hags involved, reducing them to a state of near-powerless from which it takes many months—if not years—to recover. If news of that got out, you'd get all sorts of cutters out to kill the weakened hags.

The transformation of a yugoloth does little to affect the fiend's mental facilities. Altraloths in general remain true to their base yugoloth nature, as wholly evil and avaricious as ever if not more so. By becoming more powerful, these yugoloths are now better able to satisfy their foul personal agendas as they see fit. Some altraloths are very active in the affairs of the Lower Planes while others prefer to slink among the shadows and act as unseen manipulators of fiends and mortals. It is believed that no more than a half a dozen or so altraloths currently exist.

Being yugoloths, altraloths take no damage from acid, fire, iron, and poison attacks; half damage from gas attacks; and double damage from cold attacks. All altraloths can enact the following spell-like abilities at will, in addition to any other innate abilities possessed: *alter self, animate dead, cause disease, charm person, improved phantasmal force, produce flame,* and *teleport without error.* Innate abilities or resistances altered by the hags are found under each altraloth's particular entry.

**Note:** The use of altraloths in an individual campaign will vary from setting to setting. Some DMs may want to have these powerful yugoloths work from behind the scenes much like the Lords of the Nine and not come into direct conflict with a party. DMs running this kind of campaign will find the **Plots & Goals** and **Followers & Resources** sections below to be most helpful. Other DMs will want to have their players combat an altraloth as the climax to an adventure. This is where an altraloth's statistics and abilities will be more useful to the DM.

### The General of Gehenna

Not much is known of the General except maybe for the hushed whispers one hears in the pubs of Sigil. Questions naturally arise as to whether the General is, in actuality, an ultroloth or altraloth. Sages who study fiends assert in cautious whispers that the General simply could not be an ultroloth. How else could he single-handedly manipulate the Blood War unless he possessed skills and abilities far beyond those of his other ultroloth brethren? And so the General remains an enigma to this day. Almost nothing is known about him personally. Perhaps the only thing that can be said is that he *is* the Blood War.

### Anthraxus

AL NE; AC −10; MV 15; hp 233; THAC0 −1; #AT 4 or 1; Dmg 2d6+11 (×4) or special; MR 120%; S 23, I 24, D 20, W 20, C 19, Ch 5.

Anthraxus the Diseased often displays himself as an ultroloth, but his real appearance is that of a 10'-tall man in a rotting gray suit and cape. He has a ram's head grossly deformed by disease. Foamy spittle drips constantly from his mouth, and the matted wool on his body pulls away from his skin in handfuls. Anthraxus's skin is covered with festering boils which continually burst spraying out foul yellow pus while peeling Anthraxus' skin away from the fleshy tissue underneath.

Anthraxus was originally an ultroloth created to eliminate swarm of meddlesome paladins. Seems like a few hags had somehow offended the Order of the Planes Militant, and the unforgiving paladins of that sect sought a swift and just retaliation against them. After several large-scale holy crusades across the Gray Waste, the night hags created Anthraxus to rid them of this plague of paladins. Once Anthraxus had fulfilled his contract with the hags, he immediately wrested control of the yugoloth's Wasting Tower from its previous owner to become the ruling Oinoloth. The diseased fiend ruled Khin-Oin for centuries, controlling the tower's myriad precious secrets. But this recently came to an end when he was deposed. Some say a dozen or so ultroloths united in their hatred for the altraloth and violently ejected Anthraxus from the tower. Of those usurpers, the clever ultroloth Mydianchlarus betrayed them all and took over Khin-Oin to become the Oinoloth. The other talk on this matter says that Mydianchlarus spoke a seductive lie in the ear of Anthraxus—a lie so deviously ingenious that it compelled the altraloth to do the impossible and leave Khin-Oin. Either way it happened, Mydianchlarus is the new Oinoloth and Anthraxus despises him for it.

**Combat:** Anthraxus is a truly formidable foe in battle, and it is believed he would have little trouble dispatching a greater power's avatar. He fights with blinding speed, attacking four times each round with both fists. Any physical contact between Anthraxus and another's skin conveys a terrible rotting disease (no save) to the recipient. All beings, including those normally immune to disease (such as paladins and Cerilian elves), are infected by this rotting disease. The

victim suffers 1d4 hp damage each round as painful blisters instantly appear all over the body, then burst, peeling the poor sod's skin off. The disease is highly contagious and will infect anyone coming in direct physical contact with an infected victim. Only curative spells of sixth-level or higher can cure this wasting disease. Many healers running to the aid of an afflicted comrade very soon find themselves suffering the same fate. For this reason alone, Anthraxus prefers hand-to-hand combat.

Anthraxus has the following spell-like abilities available at will: *airwalk, animate object, bind, call lightning, color spray* (7/day), *control winds, death fog, detect invisibility, detect lie, detect magic, detect poison, detect scrying, ESP, fear, fire storm* (1/day), *geas, know alignment, mass suggestion* (1/day), *non-detection, passwall, pass without trace, read magic, shapechange, shout, symbol*—any type (1/day), *wall of fire, wall of ice, wall of force.* Note that all Anthraxus' *detect* spells, *ESP, know alignment, non-detection, pass without trace,* and *read magic* abilities are always active. Anthraxus can *gate* in 1–2 ultroloths once every turn. The ultroloths are not under the altraloth's control but will usually comply with his orders rather than face Anthraxus' wrath. Anthraxus suffers no damage from cold attacks.

Additionally, Anthraxus can transfix one being with no saving throw allowed; this power also overcomes magic resistance less than 50%. A transfixed being cannot move or take any physical or mental action (including psionics) for as long as Anthraxus wills it. Only one being may be transfixed at any time.

Anthraxus also wields the Staff of the Lower Planes. The Staff is an artifact made from the defiled bones of a pit fiend and a balor that functions as a *staff of beguiling,* casts *mass charm* (3/day), and fulfill another's *wish* (1/day). The *staff* causes 3d6+14 hp damage to any being hit in combat. Fiends struck by the staff must save vs. death magic or be instantly *polymorphed* into a larva (MR applies at half). Only Anthraxus or a night hag can use the staff's powers. Any other being touching the staff must save vs. polymorph at –6 each round of contact or be transformed into a larva. The staff was fashioned by Anthraxus's hag creators at his request when he lost the title of Oinoloth. Some in the Merkant sect have speculated that the price for the hags' cooperation in making the staff would secure more than a few Prime worlds.

Anthraxus regenerates an astonishing 5 hp/round while on any of the Lower Planes. Elsewhere, he regenerates 1 hp/round. He can only be harmed by weapons of +4 or greater enchantment.

**Followers & Resources:** Anthraxus prefers to have no followers. Since his dethronement at Khin-Oin, the faithless yugoloths that served under the former Oinoloth all deserted him. But this fiendish lord, despondent as he is without his position, is not without his resources. During his time as Oinoloth, Anthraxus constructed numerous hidden keeps and safehouses throughout the Lower Planes which he filled with magical items and money. He uses these riches to finance the obsessive schemes that bring him ever closer to reclaiming Khin-Oin.

**Plots & Goals:** Anthraxus has only one current goal, and that is to gain control of Khin-Oin and once again become the Oinoloth. The current Oinoloth is not nearly as powerful as Anthraxus but has adequate forces to repel any direct attacks put forth by the altraloth. Anthraxus currently travels the Lower Planes, petitioning the powers to serve as their proxy. With the might of a god behind him, Anthraxus might just succeed were it not that most powers would never trust a yugoloth. This proxy idea is not the altraloth's sole scheme, however. Anthraxus is also seeking out "wild cards" to incorporate into his plots and confound Mydianchlarus. He hopes that by employing a team or teams of powerful cutters to force their way into the tower and keep the Oinoloth's forces distracted, Anthraxus will be able to confront the Oinoloth directly. This sounds like a good plan, except that the altraloth cannot find any cutters foolish enough to take up such a suicide mission. Anthraxus even says he'll grant wishes to helpful bloods should he succeed in becoming the Oinoloth again. A tempting offer, if failure did not guarantee certain death for the volunteers.

It has been overheard that should Anthraxus succeed in taking Khin-Oin, he will enact his new plans for the yugoloth race that would end the Blood War and unite all the Lower Planes under his control. Who better, reasons Anthraxus, to rule over lawful and chaotic evil than one who is master of both and influenced by neither. Of course, this could be just some barmy talk, but certain high-up folk on the good planes are nervous that he might actually succeed.

## Bubonix

AL NE; AC –10; MV 18; hp 219; THAC0 –3; #AT 2 or weapon; Dmg 2d4+10 (×2) or by weapon; MR 110%; S 22, I 19, D 21, W 20, C 21, Ch 12.

Patiently camped outside the still-under-construction Tower of Incarnate Pain on Carceri is the altraloth, Bubonix. This unique yugoloth eventually sees himself becoming the self-styled counterpart to the General of Gehenna and has even has gone so far as to call himself the Overlord of Carceri. So far, things have gone his way. This diseased altraloth has grown wealthy and powerful supplying misinformation and yugoloth mercenaries to the tanar'ri lords. It is not known what yugoloth form Bubonix had prior to being transformed, but it is believed that he was an arcanaloth.

Bubonix appears as a 12'-tall hideous humanoid covered in putrid black lumpy sores. The altraloth is the living embodiment of the plague after which he is named. His body exudes a strong stench of decayed, rotted flesh causing anyone within 10' radius to save vs. poison at –4 or suffer a –2 to THAC0 and AC due to extreme nausea. Bubonix always wears a military uniform of the purest white, which somehow is not stained from the constant flow of blackest pus oozing from his sores.

**Combat:** A very cunning combatant, Bubonix cautiously sizes up his opponents before he wades into battle. He favors overkill tactics that cause the most chaos in battle to confuse his enemies. This is a tactic some say he learned from his dearest companion, the tanar'ri princeling Fraz'urb'lu. When in

WELL LUV, YOU KNOW I **HATE** TO **BRAG,**

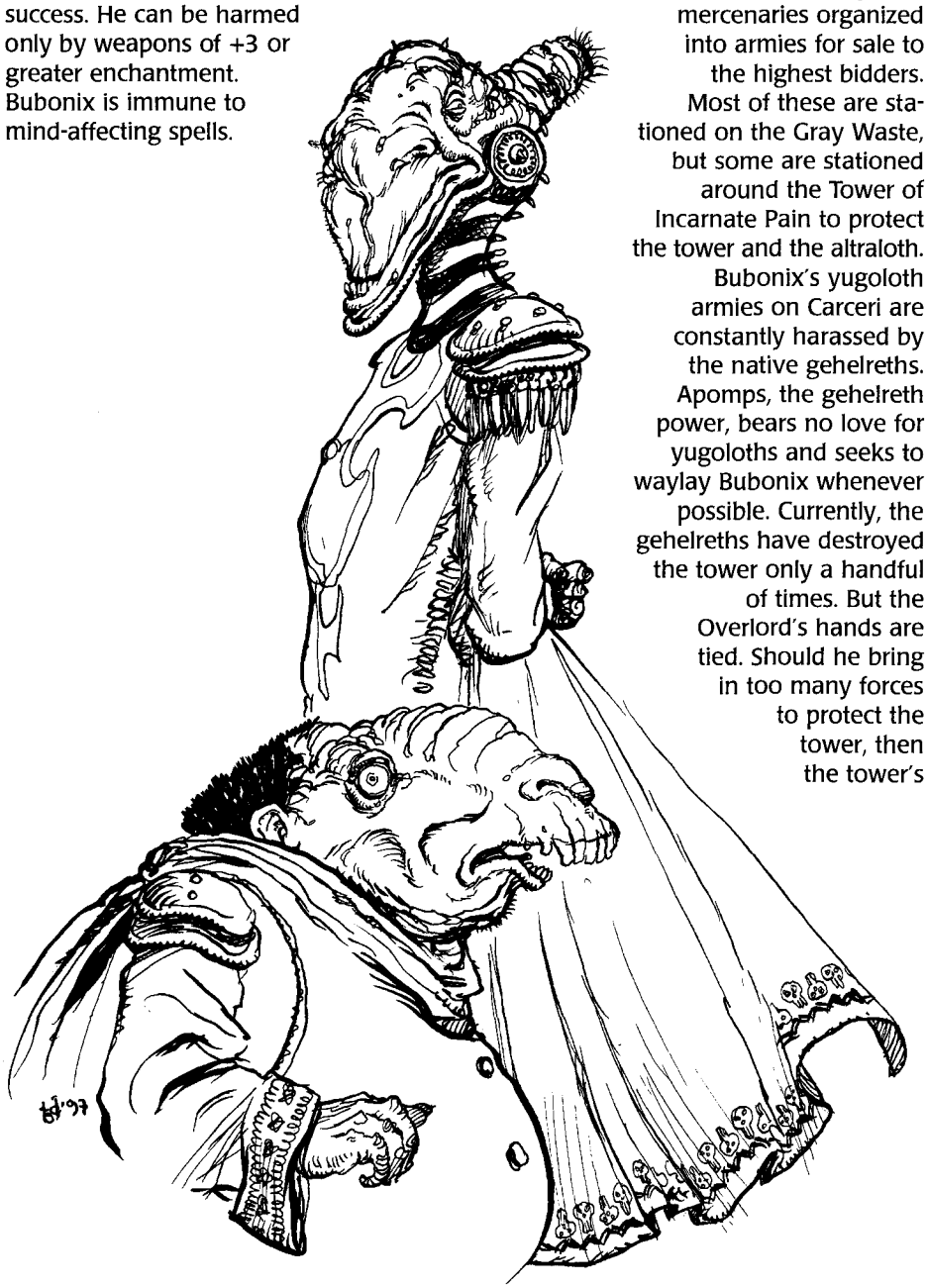
BUT I DID MAKE 'IM **WHAT HE IS** TODAY.

HE'LL ALWAYS BE THE **PRIDE 'N JOY** ...

**—RANSID**
**REMINISCING ABOUT**
**"HER" ALTRALOTH, BUBONIX**

close combat, this altraloth can either use his massive claws to tear into an opponent or swing whatever weapon he fancies at the time. Currently, Bubonix's preferred weapon is an aasimon sword that he took off a planetar spy who wandered too close to the tower. At will, Bubonix can cast *advanced illusion, continual darkness, control temperature* (one-mile radius), *dispel good, fear, fly, heat metal, unholy word* (3/day), *invisibility, magic missile* (10 missiles), *shape change* (to any humanoid form), *telekinesis, wall of force,* and *warp wood.* Thrice per day, Bubonix can employ any two of these abilities in a single combat round. Bubonix can *gate* in 2–8 arcanaloths three times a day with a 100% chance of success. He can be harmed only by weapons of +3 or greater enchantment. Bubonix is immune to mind-affecting spells.

**Followers & Resources:** Bubonix is unique among altraloths in that he retains an altraloth as his supreme lieutenant—another diseased champion, called Cholerix. Cholerix has two primary tasks. She oversees the yugoloth army encamped around the tower and personally meets with tanar'ri lords to forge mercenary contracts on behalf of Bubonix. Cholerix remains loyal to Bubonix only as long as her exorbitant salary is paid—a condition that Bubonix seems more than willing to fulfill. Cholerix's vital services have proved invaluable to the Overlord's operations and have filled his coffers with gold many times over. At Bubonix's call are thousands upon thousands of yugoloth mercenaries organized into armies for sale to the highest bidders. Most of these are stationed on the Gray Waste, but some are stationed around the Tower of Incarnate Pain to protect the tower and the altraloth. Bubonix's yugoloth armies on Carceri are constantly harassed by the native gehelreths. Apomps, the gehelreth power, bears no love for yugoloths and seeks to waylay Bubonix whenever possible. Currently, the gehelreths have destroyed the tower only a handful of times. But the Overlord's hands are tied. Should he bring in too many forces to protect the tower, then the tower's construction will no longer be a secret. This invites many curious bashers and meddlesome celestials to investigate. Bubonix is frustrated to no end over this as he does not see himself being considered an equal to either the General or the Oinoloth until he gets his own tower.



**Plots & Goals:** Bubonix plans to complete the unholy triumvirate of pure evil that will one day be comprised of himself, the General of Gehenna, and the Oinoloth. What that means for the multiverse is anyone's guess, but it doesn't bode well. The Commander is slowly becoming a significant force on the Lower Planes, but he is far from being as powerful as the General. This is a situation Bubonix hopes to rectify when the Tower of Incarnate Pain is completed.

Bubonix feeds the tanar'ri lords misinformation on baatezu troop size and deployment in order to create fears of impending baatezu invasions. The anxious Abyssal lords then hire on more yugoloth mercenaries than necessary. While never discussed, it is extremely probable that Bubonix and the General exchange information on the Blood War for each other's mutual benefit.

## Xengahra

AL N (evil tendencies); AC –9; MV 18 (Fly 48, MC B); hp 177; THAC0 5; #AT 2; Dmg 1d10+7; MR 90%; S 19, I 18, D 18, W 19, C 19, Ch 22.

Were it not for the expression of utter despair that hangs upon this altraloth's haggard face, a blood might believe herself in the presence of a true solar, the most powerful of aasimon. No one knows why any night hag wanted Xengahra to take this form or what purpose he originally served. Perhaps the hags created the altraloth in mockery of the servants of good, or perhaps they used Xengahra to achieve a long, forgotten agenda. If one chooses to believe the current chant, the night hags involved in his creation were more than a little barmy, and they got what they deserved in the end. After his contractual agreement expired, Xengahra slew his creators—an act that made him a despicable expatriate cast out of the Gray Waste.

As an outcast, Xengahra has taken to roaming the Outlands these past few centuries. Most of the folk he has encountered learned first hand that his presence means death, and they have given him many infamous titles. Near the gate-towns that border the Upper Planes of Good, he is known as the Death-Bringer, as he is rumored to drain

away life from even the heartiest of celestials. Near the gate-towns of the Lower Planes, he is called the Fallen One who spreads only despair and death wherever he walks. Whatever he is called, few in the Planes truly welcome the coming of the despairing "solar."

**Combat:** Xengahra has few combat skills and will generally attempt to flee combat if not cornered. If pressed into a physical fight, he will still use innate abilities to overcome an opponent. Xengahra does not use weapons or magical items. At will, the altraloth can enact these abilities: *command, comprehend languages, creeping doom* (1/day), *detect invisibility, detect magic* (always active), *dimension door, dispel magic, enlarge* (or its reverse *reduce*), *fear, finger of death, mirror image, project image, read magic, reverse magic* (1/day), *shape change* (3/day into any aasimon), *wind walk, word of recall.* Xengahra can only be hit by weapons enchanted to +3 or greater. Xengahra can communicate telepathically but prefers to use his melancholy, solar-like voice when conversing with others.

Even with all of these abilities, Xengahra has little need to worry about his poor combat skills. More deadly than any of his spell abilities is the entropic aura that surrounds the altraloth. The aura affects all life within a 20' radius around him. Non-intelligent plant life instantly withers and turns to ash, while intelligent or monstrous plants suffer 2d6 hp damage per round spent in the aura—no saving throw is allowed in either case. Living beings are also affected (no save) however magic resistance applies. A successful MR check must be made each round to avoid injury. Affected beings suffer from a terrible physical wasting due to magically induced starvation. Each round an affected being loses 5% of his body weight and a loss of one point to Constitution, Dexterity, and Strength. When the character has lost 40% of his body weight, he collapses to the ground, unable to fight, walk, or even crawl away. The effects of this aura are devastating to behold, as the victim's flesh visibly shrivels, pulling his skin tight around his bones. A being dies of starvation when any score drops to 0 or when reduced to 45% of his original body weight. A starving being who steps out of the aura no longer suffers from the aura's effects. Surviving victims can fully recover with normal eating and bed rest. (One week of rest restores 5% weight loss and one point in each ability.) No magical healing, not even *heal* or *restoration* spells, can reverse the effects of the starvation.

**Followers & Resources:** Xengahra has no followers, but he does have a significant number of admirers. Most notable among these are members of the Bleak Cabal and the Doomguard. The former admire the altraloth for what they see as Xengahra's utter acceptance of existence without hope, while the latter laud the altraloth as a true example of entropy in action. Sometimes these factions send out emissaries to consult with the altraloth on pertinent matters relative to decay and despair. What Xengahra says to these curious visitors is unknown but he has never dismissed or attacked members of the factions who sought him out. Faction members wisely keep a safe distance from the altraloth, lest they wish it to be their final conversation.

**Plots & Goals:** As the living embodiment of hopelessness, Xengahra has no purpose in life. The altraloth had long ago given up any interest in anything. The aura which so greatly affects the living world around him is believed to be the source for his loneliness and eternal despairing. Recently, Xengahra has chosen to stay in naturally lifeless areas of the Outlands such as barren deserts and rocky badlands. Were Xengahra to return to the Gray Waste, he would discover that neither the yugoloths nor the night hags would take much of an interest in him. Both groups are simply too absorbed in current affairs to concern themselves with an altraloth that went awry ages ago.

## Cerlic

AL NE; AC −5; MV 12; hp 140; THAC0 −1; #AT 2; Dmg 2d8 (×2) or by weapon; MR 120%; S 18, I 20, D 19, W 18, C 17, Ch 9.

Much of the travel across the Lower Planes takes place on the River Styx. Where portals are far and few between, one can always hire a marraenoloth ferrymen to take a cutter from one end of Baator to the other end of the Abyss. Most travelers go unmolested on these trips, but this was not the case ages ago when the marraenoloths came under repeated and devastating attacks by hordes of gehelreths under orders from their vengeful lord Apomps. The besieged marraenoloths initially sought aid from the greater yugoloths, but that proved fruitless. The ferrymen simply could not afford the impossibly high fees that the ultroloths demanded for their protection. It was then that the desperate marraenoloths petitioned the night hags for a protector. In exchange for an altraloth champion who would defend the marraenoloths, the hags demanded free and unrestricted ferry service on the River Styx forever. The marraenoloths complied, and Cerlic was soon after brought into existence. The altraloth ingeniously put a stop to the gehelreth attacks, and the gehelreths never again bothered the marraenoloths. To this day, how Cerlic ended the gehelreth threat remains a mystery.

Cerlic is known by many names throughout the planes and prime worlds: the Stygian Boatman, the Ferryman, and Charon, to name just a few. He appears as a large, skeletal marraenoloth standing just 7' tall with bright green eyes that glow malevolently.

**Combat:** Cerlic prefers to avoid physical combat if other tactics can be employed. If no chance of escape is available and Cerlic is forced into melee, he fights with one claw or with his skiff pole which inflicts 3d6 hp damage and causes paralyzation to its victim for 3d4 rounds (save at −4 to avoid paralyzation). Should an opponent be standing on his skiff, Cerlic manipulates the skiff to defeat an opponent. The skiff responds instantly to Cerlic's mental call and can move in any direction he desires, or shrink and grow instantly to any size. It has been reported that more than a few bashers standing on Cerlic's skiff were plunged into the Styx when Cerlic shrunk the skiff to the size of a gold piece. In the face of an overwhelming enemy, Cerlic will always flee using *teleport without error.* The altraloth can also enter the Astral, Ethereal or Prime Material Planes from anywhere in the Outer Planes.

At will, Cerlic can use the following spell-like abilities: *levitate, magic missile* (15 missiles), any *power word* (3/day), and *prismatic spray* (3/day). Once per day, Cerlic can *gate* 3d8+1 marraenoloths with a 100% chance of success. The altraloth's horrifying gaze causes *fear* in all who look upon him (save vs. spell at a −4 penalty). While on the River Styx, Cerlic can summon one 30-HD water elemental with full hit points. Composed entirely of water from the River Styx, the being strikes twice a round and causes 6d36+6 hp damage per blow. Any being struck is affected as if he touched the River Styx (e.g., suffers memory loss). Only one such elemental can be called up at a time, and only one may be summoned per turn.

Like all marraenoloths, Cerlic's listed magic resistance applies to first level spells. This resistance drops by 5% for every spell level above first level. Cerlic is immune to the memory sapping powers of the River Styx.

**Followers & Resources:** All marraenoloths are considered Cerlic's followers but they are in no sense bound to serve the altraloth.

It has always been strongly believed that Cerlic maintained a safehouse where he stored his collected fees. A planewalker recently returned to Sigil from the Astral Plane, saying she saw a stronghold, built entirely of black ice, which was staffed with "raft-riding skeletons." It doesn't require a sage to guess that that this just might be Cerlic's rumored fortress.

**Plots & Goals:** Cerlic prefers to spend his time ferrying passengers along the Styx and collecting exorbitant fees. He can be summoned to any shore of the River Styx by merely calling his name. The altraloth responds to all calls. The summoner who cannot pay the altraloth's fee is immediately attacked. Cerlic charges 10 pp per passenger per planar layer crossed and 100 pp per passenger for each plane crossed. A trip spanning many planes and layers could cost a king's ransom for each traveler. Cerlic will accept magical items in exchange for a cash payment. Cerlic's fees may be high, but passengers who pay their fare need never worry about treachery from the altraloth. Cerlic never betrays his passengers, as is often the case when traveling with ordinary marraenoloths. For this reason, the altraloth is considered the safest method for traveling the Lower Planes. Other than ferrying important lower planar figures back and forth in the Blood War, Cerlic plays no part in the politics of the Lower Planes. As the defender of all marraenoloths, Cerlic responds to all their calls for assistance. Payment for his assistance comes with a steep price, usually in the hundreds or thousands of platinum pieces—a price so great that some marraenoloths would rather die than call for his aid.

### Typhus

AL NE; AC −1; MV 12; hp 201; THAC0 special; #AT 2; Dmg 2d6+9 (×2) or by weapon; MR 75%; S 21, I 20, D 20, W 8, C 20, Ch 13.

The hags who created Typhus were in a bind. They were threatened with the greatest danger to the larva trade they had ever known. A few centuries ago, the lich power Mellifleur attempted to seize control of a large part of the larva trade for his followers. In what may have been the largest assembly of liches in one place, the undead wizards arrived on the Gray Waste and successfully slew night hags by the thousands.

In their haste to create a champion, the hags mishandled the magical energies used in the altraloth creation ceremony. The result was far different than what the hags expected. Their new champion, called Typhus, had amazingly enhanced fighting abilities, but they came at a serious loss of wisdom. The night hags ended up with a great, misshapen yugoloth warrior possessing excellent combat skills but whose potential greatness is severely hampered by his poor judgment. Typhus was able to smash the liches off the Gray Waste and then set about building an army of his own. The altraloth stands 12' high and looks much like a hunch-backed mezzoloth with a noticeable limp.

**Combat:** This altraloth has been gifted with one of the greatest combat minds in the planes. In battle Typhus acquires fantastic insights, instantly knowing the best tactics to use on an opponent. In game terms, the altraloth automatically hits an opponent on any roll except for a 1 (which automatically misses). This specialized THAC0 cannot be adversely affected by the weapon he is using or his opponent's AC. Typhus wields the Sword of Carceri, a lesser artifact forged of red steel with the blood of gehelreths. The Sword of Carceri is a *long sword +5* regardless of the plane it is on and causes triple damage to gehelreths. It causes double damage to undead and fiends, including tieflings. Open wounds caused by the sword bleed uncontrollably (additional 3 hp/round) until magically healed. Only a yugoloth can wield the *Sword of Carceri*. Any non-yugoloth who tries to touch it or otherwise carry it is affected by a *planeshift* (no save) and transported to a random layer of Carceri. The sword is left behind.

Beings within a 10' radius of Typhus must save every round of become infected with a severe case of typhoid fever. The infected victim immediately begins to burn up with fever losing one point of Constitution every turn until death occurs. Normal curative magics can cure this disease.

At will, Typhus can cast *burning hands, cloudkill* (2/day), *darkness 15' radius, detect invisibility, detect magic* (always active), *dimension door* (2/day), *dispel magic, flame strike* (3/day), *harm, hold person, mirror image, sleep,* and *trip.* Thrice per day, the altraloth can *gate* in 2d4 mezzoloths with a 90% chance of success. Typhus can be struck only by weapons of +3 enchantment or greater. Typhus is immune to paralysis, poison, and all magic from the charm/enchantment school. He suffers only half damage from cold attacks.

**Followers & Resources:** Typhus commands a rag-tag army known as The Infernal Front. It is a bizarre collection of the misbegotten and forgotten of the Blood War comprised mostly of baatezu, tanar'ri, tieflings, humans, slaadi, and even a handful of rogue modrons. Why they want to fight for Typhus is anyone's guess. Some like the idea of fighting in the Blood War, others like the idea of a third army not aligned to Baator or the Abyss, and still others are just in it for the pay. Typhus's army is much larger than the greatest armies of most Prime worlds but appears pitifully small when stacked up against the near infinite armies of Baator and the Abyss. Occasionally, an Abyssal Lord will hire Typhus and his Infernal Front to fight on his side in the Blood War. Typhus accepts any such offer, since he needs the jink to keep the Front from falling apart.

ALL RIGHT, SO WE RUSHED A LITTLE. WE NEEDED A **BLOODY HERO** FAST.

I CAN'T SAY THAT I'M SORRY HE WASN'T **PERFECT.**

IN THE END, HE GOT THE JOB DONE. **HE DID.**

I GOT **NO** REGRETS.

**—AGHASTLIA DISCUSSING TYPHUS' TROUBLED EARLY YEARS**

**Plots & Goals:** Typhus is an amiable enough fiend but an extremely unpredictable one too. A sudden insight into the Blood War will excite him so much that he becomes frenzied trying to put his plans into action. Such is the price he pays for his high intelligence and low wisdom. To this end, he has set himself up as a rival to both the General of Gehenna and Bubonix but is not taken seriously by either. Typhus often creates elaborate military plans for the Front with the goal of ending the Blood War. All of these have failed spectacularly, but the altraloth manages to survive with most of his forces intact. The pathetic altraloth has been the butt of many jokes throughout the lower planes.

## Taba

AL NE; AC –9; MV 21; hp 183; THAC0 –3; #AT as form chosen; Dmg see below; MR 130%; S 21, I 22, D 25, W 23, C 21, Ch 24.

So you want to sneak into Nessus? Or perhaps you want to get inside of Grazz't's fortress to take back that artifact he stole from your people. You're not quite sure how you will ever be able to do it. Then you hear the chant from some mysterious hag who heard your plans. She might know someone who could help, if you can pay her price. Don't ask the hag who will be your guide. It's all hush-hush. She won't tell you anything except one name—Taba. That's all you need to know berk. And rest assured, Taba will get you in. This altraloth never fails.

Little is known about Taba's history or even her true form. It's not even known if she is a female but that's the form she's most often seen in. Attempts to divine information about her automatically fail. She is the ultimate master spy and thief, with the ability to take the shape of any fiend. With this ability, she is easily able to slip into and out of the depths of any of the Lower Planes without notice. In fact, her approach to infiltration and espionage is practically foolproof. She speaks all lower planar tongues with no accent and can radiate any evil alignment she chooses.

**Combat:** Taba's *shapechange* ability allows her to take on the guise of any fiend—even letting her assume individual identities. This ability also provides her with the natural attacks, innate abilities, locomotion, and special defenses of the form chosen. Taba gains the resistance of her new form if it is better than her own natural defenses, such as a gelugon's immunity to cold. Taba usually chooses to be one of the more powerful fiends, such as balors and pit fiends, when fighting—unless it would be more appropriate to be a lesser fiend. Taba will never revert to her original form for any reason. She possesses the following innate abilities usable at will regardless of her current form: *cloudkill* (1/day), *continual darkness, death fog* (1/day), *detect lie* (always active), *dimension door, heal* (3/day), *lower resistance, magic missile* (10 missiles), *passwall, reverse gravity* (1/day), *symbol*—any (1/day), *true seeing,* and *wraithform.* She is immune to all illusion/phantasm magics. Taba has never been seen *gating* in yugoloths for assistance. The altraloth regenerates 2 hp/round on the Lower Planes.

**Followers & Resources:** Anyone wishing to inquire about Taba's services must contact one of her night hag creators. They are believed to number a dozen or so and are perhaps the longest-surviving hag covey that has ever existed. These hags always have their ears open for possible customers and will only approach someone if they feel he can pay the steep price. Only the hags know how to contact Taba and will do so when paid in full. Even then, Taba does not guarantee that she will take the job, even though she will gladly take their money. This thrill-seeking altraloth turns down any job if she does not believe it is challenging enough.

**Plots & Goals:** Truly yugoloth to her black heart, Taba is primarily interested in acquiring wealth. Unlike the other altraloths, Taba possesses an adventurous spirit. She enjoys accepting very hazardous missions and derives great pleasure when these missions are accomplished. However, even with all her powers, she does not always succeed. The high-level fiends are constantly on guard for espionage and one serious lapse could easily spell the altraloth's end.

Bloods can hire her for a variety of services, usually as guide to sneak them in somewhere they could not normally enter on their own. Taba has a few conditions that must be met before she begins a job. First of all, details and intents of the mission must be revealed to her. Second, she must be obeyed completely in all circumstances by those

who accompany her. One misstep or willful act could jeopardize the mission. She despises failure. Of course, hiring the altraloth does not make a trip to Nessus easy but Taba knows the right palms to grease, the less deadly paths to take, etc. Those who hire her must be wary. If she believes there is no way to succeed in her current mission, she'll abandon it without hesitation and move on to the next mission especially if one of her 'employers' blundered the operation. This may mean stranding a party on Cania with a horde of baatezu in hot pursuit. Those she abandons never live to report her treachery. In the past, Taba has also been paid to retrieve or deliver artifacts, kidnap high ranking fiends, and other fiend-related matters. She won't enter any powers' realms or visit the Upper Planes as she rightfully fears powers and celestials. She even refuses to work for aasimars because of their close blood-ties to good. Taba actively limits her business affairs to the Lower Planes.

## Recipe for an Altraloth

Once a yugoloth has been chosen and the terms of the contract approved by both the hags and the yugoloth, then the metamorphic process is begun. First a huge cauldron is filled with water from the River Styx and putrid larva. A huge fire is lit under the cauldron, and the yugoloth is sealed within the cauldron with melted wax made from the slimy larval residue. Wards are placed around the cauldron and the hags begin their incantations to imbue their champion with magical power. The incantations take one full day of casting for each alteration made to the yugoloth. The night hags voluntarily donate their life force to empower the yugoloth. There are rumors that some metamorphic incantations have lasted a month or longer. This would explain the existence of the more powerful altraloths.

When the incantation is finished, the drained hags are often severely exhausted and in no shape to defend themselves. None of their innate abilities function for 1d8+1 days, and their immunities and magic resistance are completely suppressed for a like amount of time. It is not known how long it takes hags to fully recover from participating in this evil ceremony. Night hags maintain the utmost secrecy about their participation taking great care to keep themselves well-hidden until their strength returns, lest someone take slay them while they are weakened.

**Birth:** The cauldron must be kept at boiling temperatures for the entire time until the altraloth's 'birth' occurs. Hags usually imprison fire mephits under the cauldron, using the mephits' fiery bodies to maintain the necessary temperature. After 6d6 months of steeping, the process finishes with the violent explosion of the cauldron spraying out larva juice and chunks of heated metal. Anyone within 25' of the bursting cauldron suffers 3d10+10 worth of damage from flesh-rending shrapnel plus an additional 2d8 hp damage from the caustic larva juice. (The larvae have long since dissolved, surrendering their magical energies to the champion.) Emerging from the cauldron is the newest hag-champion—an altraloth.

**Complications:** Complications during the entire process can have disastrous consequences for all involved.

❖ Minor interruptions during the casting (such as a visiting fiend who demands attention) merely add on another day's worth of casting. An outright attack that disrupts the casting hags ends the process and kills the yugoloth inside.

❖ If the temperature in the cauldron falls below boiling, the yugoloth dies, and the hags each lose 1d4 Hit Dice permanently. Hags always employ safeguards to prevent any cooling.

❖ Even if all goes well, there is still a slight chance (5%) that the process will fail for no apparent reason. A failure usually occurs 1d4 months into the process and causes the cauldron to explode with the same spectacular results as a successful "birth," except that the yugoloth dies.

❖ Magical or physical attacks on the cauldron cause its premature explosion, instantly killing the yugoloth inside and permanently enervating the contributing hags.

❖ Magical precautions have been woven into the transforming incantations by the night hags that virtually guarantee the loyalty of their new creation. An altraloth who attacks one of its mistresses or who ignores the conditions of the contract immediately suffers wracking pain, losing 25% of its hit points every round. This continues until death occurs, the altraloth ceases its attack, or the champion submits again to the contract's conditions. Only the completion of its contract can free an altraloth from this restriction.

❖ Should one of the altraloth's hag creators die during the time of the contracted period of servitude, the altraloth

also dies. It is therefore in the altraloth's best interests to see to the well-being of its mistresses until the contract has expired.

### Alterations

The altraloth process enhances yugoloths and imbues them with abilities and powers. No abilities the yugoloth possesses going into the process are lost unless that ability is modified by the night hags. Note that changes made to a yugoloth are permanent and cannot be undone. In game terms, the hags involved must surrender a portion of their life force (Hit Dice) to bring about the desired transformation. Regardless of what a hag desires, no hag can surrender her last Hit Die in the process (e.g., be reduced below 1 HD). Listed here are the modifications that a hag can bring about and the required cost in life force for each modification. Given the high cost in hagly life force and the other inherent dangers involved, it is understandable why so very few altraloths exist. Not many hags wish to risk being rendered this vulnerable despite the obvious benefit of controlling a powerful being.

**Add Hit Dice:** Hit Dice are added to the creature's total hit dice.

**Add Spell Ability:** Hags can imbue the altraloth with a permanent spell ability usable once a day. The same ability may be added more than once but must be paid for each time.

**Augmented Hit Points:** The altraloth has full hit points for whatever HD it possesses. Note that altraloths can also receive bonus hit points for high Constitution scores as fighters do.

**Enhance Existing Ability:** A yugoloth's existing innate ability can be upgraded to a more powerful version, should one exist. For example, a marraenoloth's *alter self* ability can be enhanced to *polymorph self* or *shapechange*.

**Change Size or Appearance:** The altraloth's mass size can be increased by up to 100% or reduced to 50% of the fiend's original size and mass.

The altraloth can also be made to have any humanoid form. Especially creative hags have been known to indulge themselves wickedly with this option.

**Change Alignment:** Some hags have altered the alignment of the yugoloth into one more suitable for the fiend's mission.

**Change Ability Score:** Any of the altraloth's ability scores can be raised or lowered.

**Change Physical Attacks:** If the altraloth's appearance was changed, the hags may also have to alter the fiend's mode of attack usually increasing the number of attacks allowed per round such as if extra limbs were added.

**Change Magic Resistance:** The fiend may have its magic resistance raised (or lowered). MR may exceed 100%.

**Immunity:** An altraloth can be rendered completely immune to certain effects: cold, electricity, gas, magic missile, weapons of less than +4 enchantment, or one specialty school of magic.

*Ed Bonny is the author of "Heroes of Athas," from the 1996* Dragon Magazine *Annual, and "Planar Heroes," from issue #235.*

# Villains of Gothic Earth

by James Wyatt

**illustrated by Brad McDevitt**

The *Masque of the Red Death* rules expand the rules of the RAVENLOFT® setting into the world of Gothic Earth. Gothic Earth is much like our own Earth in the period of the 1890's, but it has been invaded by a supernatural evil called the Red Death. No one has ever encountered the Red Death or battled it directly, but its minions work wherever there are human beings, corrupting them, feeding on them, and seeking to exterminate any and all resistance to the power of their evil master. Appendix II in *A Guide to Gothic Earth* describes several "Villains of Gothic Earth," lords of evil who are among the most powerful minions of the Red Death. These lords and their servants are generally the focus for *Masque of the Red Death* adventures, as Player Characters seek to foil their plans and exterminate them.

Here are eight more such villains, lords of evil in their own right, yet servants of a more powerful master. They represent a variety of monster types, including a yuan-ti and a beholder, and maintain lairs in widely scattered parts of the world, from Montréal to Madagascar to Indonesia. Adventurers can first encounter them in their home territory, or they might intrude upon their minions carrying out their masters' foul plans halfway across the globe.

Many of these villains could easily be used in a traditional RAVENLOFT campaign or even any other AD&D® campaign. In the same way, villains detailed for the RAVENLOFT setting are easily adaptable to Gothic Earth. This is particularly true of the "Children of the Night" detailed in the second RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® appendix. Such creatures as the living brain Rudolph Von Aubrecker, the half-golem Desmond LaRouche, and the meazel Salizarr would fit perfectly into the world of Gothic Earth. These can appear as simple monstrous opponents, or the DM can adapt them for use as Darklords in their own right.

## The Abomination

*Yuan-ti Abomination, Chaotic Evil*

| | |
|---|---|
| ARMOR CLASS: 0 | STRENGTH: 19 |
| MOVEMENT: 9 | DEXTERITY: 9 |
| HIT DICE: 9 | CONSTITUTION: 17 |
| HIT POINTS: 55 | INTELLIGENCE: 18 |
| THAC0: 11 | WISDOM: 17 |
| NO. OF ATTACKS: 1 | CHARISMA: 5 |

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1–6
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Constrict, spells, poison bite
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Spells, immune to poison, danger sense
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 20%

### Combat

The Abomination, once human, has been transformed by a deadly curse into a monstrous snake-like creature. His head is that of a human man, with noble features and a leering smile, his inhuman eyes partially hidden behind pince-nez spectacles. From his otherwise human-seeming mouth jut a pair of vicious fangs, dripping with poison. Below this head, his neck quickly takes

on the appearance of a huge constrictor snake, covered in scales with a diamond-shaped pattern of olive, light green, and black. His body is fully 15 feet long and powerfully muscled, able to squeeze the life out of even a powerful human or large animal.

The Abomination has all the powers and abilities of a yuan-ti abomination. Like all human-headed yuan-ti, he can cast the following spells once per day: *cause fear, darkness 15' radius, snake charm, sticks to snakes, neutralize poison, suggestion,* and *polymorph other.* In addition, he can use *ESP* at will and cast *sleep* once per day. His innate danger sense gives him a +2 bonus to his surprise rolls. He is completely immune to all forms of toxins, suffering no damage or other ill effects from poison.

Normally, the Abomination attacks by constricting his intended victims in his monstrous coils. A successful attack against the victim's normal AC indicates that the victim is wrapped in the creature's tail, suffering 1–6 hp damage per round until the victim can break free. Releasing the Abomination's hold on a victim requires a successful Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll. Once a victim is held in his coils, the Abomination can attack with his poisonous bite, gaining a +4 bonus to his attack roll. A successful hit injects type E poison into the victim. The victim saves against this poison with a −3 penalty and dies instantly if the save fails. If the save succeeds, the victim still suffers 20 hp damage.

### Lair

The Abomination dwells in an ancient temple complex in the heart of the jungle in British North Borneo. He rarely ventures out from these ruins because of his monstrous appearance, but he operates instead through human and yuan-ti agents.

The Abomination can mentally control any snake, yuan-ti, or other snakelike monster (ophidian, hebi-no-onna, etc.) within one mile of his temple.

### Background

The Abomination was once human, an Englishman by the name of Edward Holling, the founder and governor of a small colonial town in British North Borneo. As governor of Hollingsford, as the city was called, Holling ruled with brutality and unchecked greed. Convinced that enormous stockpiles of gold lay hidden in the jungle, Holling drove his own people into the ground in

search of these riches, and enslaved the natives of the jungle as well. Any argument or resistance on the part of colonists or natives was met with fierce reprisals from the governor. Eventually, as Holling's men pressed farther and farther into the jungle with the help of their native slaves, they discovered what Holling had been searching for: an ancient temple, covered over with vines and collapsed into rubble, yet certainly—Holling thought—filled with riches. Holling arrived at the scene with haste, then ordered his men into the temple, oblivious to the palpable fear of the natives. The first group to enter the temple died amidst screams of torment, but Holling would not be dissuaded. He sent another group in. These too perished, their screams echoing in the surrounding jungle. At last Holling ordered his remaining soldiers to round up 50 natives and slaughter them outside the entrance to the temple, hoping to placate whatever evil dwelt therein. As Holling and his soldiers stood amid the blood of the helpless natives, a dark, serpent-like form writhed out from the temple before them, engulfing them in its shadowy grasp. The wicked Holling was immediately transformed into the snakelike Abomination, while his brutal soldiers became yuan-ti halfbreeds and purebloods.

The Abomination still resides in that temple in the heart of the jungle of North Borneo, surrounded by yuan-ti slaves. The temple holds no riches, however, and part of Holling's curse is that any gold brought into the temple is transformed immediately and irrevocably into lead.

Holling always desired material wealth, but also lived for the enjoyment of such wealth in the form of power over others as well as all the comforts wealth could buy him in sophisticated English society. Cut off from human society by his monstrous form (which no magical or psionic ability can ever alter), isolated in his ruined temple, the Abomination that was Holling has no wealth, no pleasures of society, and very little power over humans.

The Abomination continues to manipulate and enslave humans, however, through his yuan-ti agents and the ability to create histachii by forcing humans to drink his venom in a potent herbal mixture. His purposes, if any, are unclear, but it seems that the Abomination is motivated by the same lust for power and wealth that drove him during his human life, though these things are forever beyond his grasp. In his dealings with humans, the Abomination is capable of great subtlety befitting his high Intelligence, and he often works through pureblood agents that seem human in order to bend other humans to his service.

The town of Hollingsford has disappeared into the jungle in the five years since Holling's disappearance.

## Grepik

*Jermlaine Elder, Neutral Evil*

| | |
|---|---|
| Armor Class: 7 | Strength: 8 |
| Movement: 15 | Dexterity: 19 |
| Hit Dice: 1 | Constitution: 9 |
| Hit Points: 8 | Intelligence: 15 |
| THAC0: 19 | Wisdom: 17 |
| No. of Attacks: 1 | Charisma: 10 |

Damage per Attack: 1–2 (dart) or 1–4 (spear)
Special Attacks: Surprise, beating, cause disease, drain magic items, stone shape
Special Defenses: Save as 4 HD monster
Magic Resistance: Nil

### Combat

Standing only 14 inches tall, Grepik is hardly an imposing figure. His strength lies in his stealth and in the magical abilities he possesses as a servant of the Red Death. Grepik appears as a tiny humanoid with baggy, leathery skin of gray-brown color, an elongated bald head, and muscular arms and legs. He talks in a squeaky voice, and he speaks English only haltingly (which is better than most of the jermlaine under his leadership).

Grepik, like all of his kind, prefers to ambush weak victims rather than fight

anyone fairly. His stealth imposes a –5 penalty to opponents' surprise rolls, and makes him undetectable (75%) even under the best of conditions. He carries a quiver full of needle-like darts which he can throw up to 120 feet, inflicting 1–2 hp damage on a hit. He also wields a small spear that causes 1–4 hp damage.

Like all jermlaine elders, Grepik can drain the magic from a magical item if he can handle it for 1–4 rounds. Also, the touch of his left hand causes a debilitating disease like that carried by giant rats; he keeps the hand wrapped in rags most of the time to prevent carelessly infecting anyone.

### Lair

Grepik's lair is a vast network of tiny tunnels that twist between larger caverns and mine shafts through much of northern Appalachia. Within these small tunnels, Grepik has total control over the rock, allowing him to expand or contract a tunnel, open a pit, or cause a cave-in. In these areas, he can also use *distance distortion* at will and phase through up to 100 feet of solid rock. Grepik's powers are not effective in mine shafts, natural caverns, or other areas that were not carved by jermlaine hands.

### Background

Grepik and his followers have been living deep in the mountains of Appalachia for years, and their ancestors for hundreds of years before that. Only within the last decade or so has Grepik discovered openings leading from his extensive warren of tunnels into several coal mines in the area of West Virginia and Ohio. In that time Grepik has discovered the joys of tormenting surface dwellers–and eating their sweets! The jermlaine capture and torment the occasional human miner, as well as engaging in stealing and other pranks, trying their best to escape human notice.

Despite the relatively innocuous lifestyle of these jermlaine, even these creatures have not escaped the notice of the Red Death. Even the minor hindrance of human mining operations means another obstacle, however small, in the way of human progress, and it is possible that the Red Death is grooming Grepik for more important work in the future.

## Grethiyn Graymalk

*5th-level Githyanki Necromancer, Chaotic Evil*

ARMOR CLASS: 10
MOVEMENT: 12
HIT DICE: 5d4
HIT POINTS: 18
THAC0: 19
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1
STRENGTH: 12
DEXTERITY: 9
CONSTITUTION: 16
INTELLIGENCE: 18
WISDOM: 15
CHARISMA: 12
DAMAGE PER ATTACK: By weapon
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Spells, psionics
Special Defenses: spells, psionics
Magic Resistance: Nil

### Psionics Summary

Level 5; Dis 2/Sci 3/Dev 10; Attack/Defense All/All; MTHAC0 14; MAC 4; PSPs 212

**Psychometabolism:** (s) death field, life draining, (d) adrenaline control, cell adjustment, displacement, double pain, flesh armor, mind over body

**Telepathy:** (s) mindlink, (d) conceal thoughts, ESP, inflict pain, mind bar

**Note:** If the psionics rules in *The Complete Psionics Handbook* are being used, rather than the updated rules in *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Skills and Powers*, the contact devotion should replace conceal thoughts. If the DM wishes to avoid psionics entirely, Grethiyn's psionic abilities can be replaced with equivalent magical abilities or simply ignored.

### Combat

Not being native to this plane, Grethiyn Graymalk possesses powerful magical and psionic abilities unknown to ordinary inhabitants of Gothic Earth. He is a 5th-level specialist necromancer, and can cast spells with their ordinary casting time and without having to make a proficiency check. He can cast four first-level, three second-level, and two third-level spells each day, but at least one spell of each level must belong to the school of

necromancy. Grethiyn's psionic abilities are summarized above. He regains one-tenth of his total PSPs (21 PSPs) per hour of sleep or deep meditation, PSP recovery being slightly dampened on Gothic Earth.

In addition to his spells and psionic powers, Grethiyn can use a *plane shift* at will. Because of the nature of Gothic Earth, however, this ability allows him only to enter the Border Ethereal, which he has learned is an effective way to avoid pursuit or other complications. Grethiyn can also *animate dead* by touch three times per day, creating up to ten skeletons or five zombies.

### Lair

Grethiyn resides in a large mansion in the city of Boston. Within that house, he is truly master. He has absolute command over any undead creature within the house, whether or not he animated it himself. He can cast each of his memorized spells twice within the house, and when he enters the house his memory of all spells previously cast that day is instantly restored. Within the house, Grethiyn gains 20% magic resistance and regenerates 2 hp per round. Grethiyn can be completely slain only if the house is first burned to the ground.

Grethiyn has assembled a coterie of minions to do his bidding within Boston. Much of this work is directed toward filling the coffers at Graymalk mansion, and much of the rest simply toward spreading chaos in the city, but Grethiyn has not forgotten that his ultimate purpose is to escape from Gothic Earth, and he pays very close attention to any clue that might lead him in that direction. Also doing his bidding is a virtual army

of animated undead, "recruited" as the need arises, usually for specific tasks.

### Background

Grethiyn Graymalk was brought to Gothic Earth by a metaphysician named Dr. Julius Earl, who created an electrical device that could open a portal to the Astral plane. The device malfunctioned, allowing Grethiyn to enter the Prime Material realm of Gothic Earth before short-circuiting and exploding in a shower of sparks. Grethiyn slowly tortured and killed the misguided scientist, and only then, upon trying to return to his home in the Astral Plane, did he discover that he was trapped. Enraged, he stormed out into the city of Boston, using his magic and psionics to create havoc and destruction around him, venting his anger and frustration. When a police carriage full of officers waving pistols started chasing after him, he shrugged off their bullets and slaughtered them. This battle calmed him, however, and he disappeared into the city, disguising himself to appear as close to human as possible. Then he began plotting his escape.

Shortly after his arrival on Gothic Earth, Grethiyn was contacted by heralds of the Red Death and offered great power in exchange for his service. Grethiyn readily accepted, planning to betray his unknown "master" as soon as an opportunity presented itself, but eager to achieve any power which could help him win his escape from Gothic Earth. As a servant of the Red Death, Grethiyn was granted the ability to to *animate dead* with a touch, as well as other special powers within his lair (see above). He has gained great power but is now all the more strongly bound to Gothic Earth because of his servitude to the Red Death.

Three months have passed since Grethiyn's arrival. The mystery of his initial reign of terror is marked "unsolved" by the Boston police. Grethiyn has adopted a human identity, posing as an Estonian man called Eero Grethiyn, a man of fine breeding and unusual accent. His English is poor, but his knowledge of Boston and American customs is growing rapidly. His ornate robes and weapons have been exchanged for an expensive suit and a handy navy pistol. His very unfashionable mane of hair ("Oh, it is all the rage in Europe!") covers the pointed tips and serrated edges of his ears, and spectacles help to shield his gleaming black eyes from inspection. Most of the time, a heavy black cloak and top hat shroud his unusual character even further.

Now, a former student of Dr. Earl, a Frenchman called Jean-Marc Tessant, has arrived in Boston to visit his former professor. Grethiyn has taken note of the scientist's arrival and will be working to prod Tessant into reconstructing Dr. Earl's research to enable Grethiyn to return home.

## Musaf ibn-Talir

*Jackalwere, Chaotic Evil*

ARMOR CLASS: 4
MOVEMENT: 12
HIT DICE: 4
HIT POINTS: 21
THAC0: 17
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1
STRENGTH: 12
DEXTERITY: 15
CONSTITUTION: 13
INTELLIGENCE: 13
WISDOM: 12
CHARISMA: 14
DAMAGE PER ATTACK: 2d4
Special Attacks: Gaze causes sleep
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Iron or magical weapon to hit
MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

### Combat

As a jackalwere, Musaf ibn-Talir's most insidious ability is the power to change his shape, switching at will between human, jackal, and hybrid forms. As a jackal, he is indistinguishable from the normal animals which haunt the deserts of Palestine. In hybrid form, he has the head and claws of a jackal on a humanoid body covered with short fur. He walks erect, standing a little over five feet tall. In human form, ibn-Talir is a small man, about 5'3", with olive skin, black hair, a weathered face, and squinting eyes. Unlike most jackalweres, he cannot alter his human appearance—he always appears in the form he had before his curse took effect.

Musaf ibn-Talir prefers to do battle in his hybrid form, attacking with his fierce bite. He can also bite in his jackal form, though his smaller mouth inflicts only 1d4 hp damage. In human form, ibn-Talir may be armed with an army pistol or rifle.

In all of his forms, the gaze of the jackalwere acts as a powerful *sleep* spell. Anyone who meets his gaze, regardless of level, must save vs. spell or fall asleep. Also regardless of his form, ibn-Talir is immune to nonmagical weapons unless they are forged of cold iron.

### Lair

Jerusalem is built around three valleys, its buildings climbing up their surrounding hills. Under one of these hills,

Bezetha (on which is built much of the northern part of the modern city), an archaeologist named Barclay discovered a subterranean complex of tunnels and chambers, leading eventually to great white halls supported by immense pillars—a quarry thought to be the source of rock for Solomon's Temple. Though it shows signs of human presence in the years since it was used as a quarry, it is now home only to wild animals—and to Musaf ibn-Talir.

Within the quarry, ibn-Talir's sleep-inducing gaze is irresistible; his victims do not get a saving throw against its effects once they meet his gaze. He can command any of the numerous jackals in the cavern complex to obey him, which they do without question. Within the quarry, he regenerates 1 hp per round, and his piercing cry acts as a *fear* spell (with normal saving throws allowed).

### Background

Musaf ibn-Talir was once a normal human, a native of Jerusalem whose cruelty was exceeded only by his cowardice. He began his criminal career as an ordinary street thug, robbing his victims (predominantly European tourists, archaeologists, and missionaries) in dark alleys and desolate locations. He attacked only single victims, preferring elderly gentlemen and delicate Victorian ladies—those who would offer little resistance. He usually left his hapless victims dead rather than run the risk that they could bring about his arrest and conviction by the local authorities.

As ibn-Talir continued his life of crime, he became more interested in the killing of his victims than in the robbery itself.

Growing ever less concerned with the valuables possessed by those he robbed, he derived greater and greater pleasure from inflicting pain on them before dispatching them. Finally, he ceased robbing altogether, killing for pleasure. Sometimes he would even stoop to scavenging—he would follow another thug until he had mugged some poor soul, wait for the mugger to leave, then step in to finish the victim off in as slow and painful a manner as possible.

Soon ibn-Talir began hearing whispered voices as he lurked in the darkened alleys of Jerusalem. The whispers told him of great power to be had in the service of a dark master, and encouraged his practice of killing for its own sake. At first he thought he was going mad and ignored the whispers, but finally he could take it no longer—he acknowledged them and embraced their offer, becoming a servant of the Red Death. He took the physical form of a scavenger, a jackal, but gained enough power to make him a hunter in his own right, preying on humans for his own pleasure while serving the Red Death by spreading evil, violence, and pain in the world of Gothic Earth.

## Ndrionohary[1]

*Beholder, Lawful Evil*

ARMOR CLASS: 0/2/7
MOVEMENT: Fl 3 (B)
HIT DICE: 45–75 hp
HIT POINTS: 75
THAC0: 5
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1
STRENGTH: 13
DEXTERITY: 14
CONSTITUTION: 16
INTELLIGENCE: 17
WISDOM: 15
CHARISMA: 13
DAMAGE PER ATTACK: 2–8
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Magic
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Anti-magic ray
MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

### Combat

Though worshiped as a god, the creature called Ndrionohary is a standard AD&D beholder in virtually all respects. It is a large spherical being, fully the size of a human man, with a large central eye set above a gaping, tooth-filled maw, and ten smaller eyes set on eyestalks on top of its armor-plated body. It floats about slowly by levitation.

The beholder's ten small eyes have the usual powers for these creatures, equivalent to the spells unless otherwise noted: *charm person, charm monster, sleep* (only one target), *telekinesis* (250 lb. maximum), *flesh to stone* (to 30 yards), *disintegrate* (to 20 yards), *fear* (as wand), *slow* (single target), *cause serious wounds* (to 50 yards), and *death spell* (single target, 40-yard range). Its large central eye emits an anti-magic ray with a range of 140 yards, covering a 90-degree arc in front of it.

Each eyestalk is AC 2 and can withstand 5–12 (1d8+4) hp damage before being severed. The small eyes atop the stalks are AC 7. Damage to the small eyes and eyestalks is not subtracted from the creature's total hit points. Ndrionohary's central eye is also AC 7, and accounts for 25 hp of the creature's total. Its body is AC 0 and "holds" the creature's remaining 50 hp.

When Ndrionohary is attacked, roll percentile dice to determine the location of the attack: 01–75: body (AC 0); 76–85: central eye (AC 7); 86–95: eyestalk (AC 2); 96–00: smaller eye (AC 7). A called shot may of course target a specific location on the creature, with the normal penalties for such an attack.

### Lair

The creature called Ndrionohary resides in a small village on the island of Madagascar. The island is a limited protectorate under the "care" of France, though later in the decade, between 1895 and 1896, Madagascar is destined to be invaded and annexed by France. The inhabitants of the village revere the beholder as a god, and they are all under its charm. They bring it regular sacrifices, consisting of game, fruits, and the occasional European explorer. Ndrionohary has no unusual powers within the village where it resides. The place is still considered a "lair of evil," however, imposing the usual penalties to fear, horror, madness, and powers checks (*A Guide to Gothic Earth*, page 108).

### Background

The race of beholders, a common terror in many AD&D worlds, is generally unknown on Gothic Earth. It is not known whether the being worshiped in the forest highlands of Madagascar is a native of Gothic Earth, perhaps a transformed human like other villains described in this article, or perhaps a plane-travelling or even spelljamming creature trapped here by accident or design. In any case, it has made its presence known on the island only since the mid-1880s, roughly coinciding with the beginning of French control. The natives of the island, certainly under the influence of the beholder's *charm person* ability, recognized it as an avatar or manifestation of the god Ndrionohary, believed to be the creator of earth and sky, god of the sun, moon, and rain, and giver of life to humankind. Whatever its motives, the beholder did nothing to dissuade the villagers from this belief and has ruled the village as Ndrionohary ever since.

Ndrionohary does not seem to have a revolutionary agenda—nor really any agenda whatsoever beyond the basic satisfaction of its needs for food, power, and service. It does seem to thrive on the adoration of the villagers, and the monster enjoys bending them to its will.

## Juliette Preduit

*Wererat, Neutral Evil*

ARMOR CLASS: 6
MOVEMENT: 12
HIT DICE: 3+1
HIT POINTS: 20
THAC0: 17
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1
STRENGTH: 17
DEXTERITY: 13
CONSTITUTION: 12
INTELLIGENCE: 15
WISDOM: 11
CHARISMA: 9
DAMAGE PER ATTACK: by weapon (human or hybrid forms) or 1–4 (rat form)
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Surprise, expanded damage with shotgun
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Silver or magical weapon to hit (hybrid and rat forms)
MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil

### Combat

Juliette Preduit is a wererat, a human with the ability to assume the form of a giant rat or that of a hybrid rat-woman. In her human form, she is far from the typical wererat—she is tall, muscular, and stern where most wererats are

1 This section of this article was inspired and informed by Michael John Wybo II's article, "The Deities of Africa," in *DRAGON Magazine* #215.

short, wiry, and shifty. She dresses in masculine clothes that smell of sweat and the sewers.

Preduit is a brutal fighter, preferring the blast of a shotgun to the rapiers and knives of other wererats. Her strength and size in rat form give her a significant bite attack as well; this is the only way Preduit can pass on her lycanthropy to humans.

In both her hybrid and her rat forms, Juliette is immune to attacks from nonmagical weapons, unless they are made of pure silver.

### Lair

Juliette Preduit is the leader of a Parisian wererat clan that has found a new home in the sewers of Montréal. The city's entire sewer system is her lair, and within those tunnels her powers increase dramatically. She gains the ability to use a *stinking cloud* spell at will and is herself immune to its effects. She can also *summon swarm* at will, conjuring a writhing mass of rats to sweep over her enemies. Finally, she can *dimension door* freely anywhere within the limits of the city's sewers.

### Background

Paris is well-known for the tales of shapechanging rat-men making their homes in its sewers. In fact, vast numbers of wererats reside in the city's sewers, prevented from dominating the surface of the city perhaps only by the tremendous rivalry that exists between different clans or packs of the creatures. Juliette Preduit was born and raised in Paris' sewers, and by her strength and cunning quickly rose to lead a large pack. About ten years ago, however, her leadership was challenged by an underling, and a schism in her clan resulted. Tired of the constant struggles between packs and within her own, Preduit took her loyal followers aboard a steamship bound for the greatest French-speaking city outside of France: Montréal.

For a few years, Preduit and her pack preyed with impunity on residents and sailors in the busy port of Montréal. In the last two years, though, Preduit and her wererats have come to the attention of a clan of seawolves that have dominated the seaport in that city for decades (see "Mysterious Cities" in *Dragon Magazine* #240 for details), and bitter warfare has erupted between the two races of lycanthropes. In the midst of this supernatural conflict, the humans of the city remain the unfortunate victims of both parties, but it might be only a matter of time before Preduit and the seawolf pack leader come face-to-face and determine which group of lycanthropes will rule the nights in Montréal through the turn of the century.

## Sheldra

*4th-level Sahuagin Mystic (Shaman), Lawful Evil*

| | |
|---|---|
| Armor Class: 5 | Strength: 16 |
| Movement: 12, Sw 24 | Dexterity: 10 |
| Hit Dice: 4 | Constitution: 13 |
| Hit Points: 21 | Intelligence: 14 |
| THAC0: 18 | Wisdom: 15 |
| No. of Attacks: 3 or 5 | Charisma: 7 |
| Damage per Attack: 1–2/1–2/1–4 +1 (kicks 1–4/1–4 +1) | |
| Special Attacks: Fear, spells | |
| Special Defenses: Spells | |
| Magic Resistance: Nil | |

### Combat

Sheldra is a sahuagin shaman, a priestess of their diabolical shark deity. She is a sterling physical example of her race, towering to 6'4" in height, with black and green scales covering her muscular body. Her face has been ritually scarred to look almost as though she were wearing a mask. She wears a seaweed necklace hung with shark's teeth and a piece of coral carved in the shape of a shark.

Sheldra can attack with claws and a bite, inflicting one extra point of damage per attack because of her Strength. More often, she prefers to leave the physical battle to the sahuagin she leads, lending her aid in the form of her mystical powers. Twice per day, she can cause *fear* as the fourth-level wizard spell. She has

access to spells as a fourth-level mystic, with major access to the Combat sphere and minor access to the spheres of All and Healing (reversed spells only). A typical complement of spells for a raid is as follows: *cause light wounds* (×2), *bless; chant, spiritual hammer.*

If encountered underwater, Sheldra can attack five times, adding the claws on her feet to the claw-claw-bite routine. In addition, she has the ability to *charm* sharks at will to do her bidding. When faced with humans in primitive diving gear, she seeks to cut air lines and otherwise foul the equipment to drown the hapless divers.

### Lair

Sheldra and her clan of sahuagin dwell in an underwater village near the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. She has no exceptional powers within her lair, at least in part because she is new to the leadership of her clan.

### Background

A tiny clan of sahuagin is all that remains of a tribe which raided the entire eastern seaboard before the time of Columbus. This small group has survived only by abandoning the ancient sahuagin practice of raiding coastal towns, settling into more peaceful and isolationist ways instead. The clan's most recent leader, a four-armed mutant named Kruthen, was a firm proponent of this policy, but Sheldra, the clan shaman, a member of a new generation, longed to restore her people to their former glory.

Sheldra's opportunity came when Kruthen was caught in a fishing net in

the Chesapeake Bay, hauled to the surface, and imprisoned for research at the U.S. naval base in Norfolk, Virginia. Assuming the leadership of the clan by tribal custom, Sheldra began a crusade of vengeance against the humans of the coastlands, ostensibly seeking to rescue Kruthen but in actuality simply living out her lifelong dream of leading her people into battle.

Sheldra is not a born leader; in fact, most of her clan are not entirely comfortable around her. She has a grating personality, but she has the rightful claim to the clan leadership in Kruthen's absence, and most of her people share her desire to raid the humans, so for now she is unchallenged. But she dreads the inevitable day when she loses control—if Kruthen actually turns up to take his rightful place, or if he is discovered to be dead, proving that the clan needs to select a new military leader. She is horrendously insecure of her leadership as a result, agonizing over every leadership decision.

Sheldra believes that her race is vastly superior to humanity and intends to demonstrate that fact to the measly humans who think they can hold a sahuagin leader captive. She delights in inflicting pain and suffering on the surface-dwellers, but behaves as a gruff but gentle mother toward her own people. Sheldra loves alcohol, which she can only gain by raiding humans. She won't allow any of her clan to drink the stuff because of its effect on the body and mind, but she hoards it for herself when she comes across it in a raid.

## Praskovia Voronov[2]

*Odem, Chaotic Evil*

ARMOR CLASS: n/a
MOVEMENT: 9
HIT DICE: n/a
HIT POINTS: n/a
THAC0: n/a
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1
STRENGTH: n/a
DEXTERITY: n/a
CONSTITUTION: n/a
INTELLIGENCE: very
WISDOM: n/a
CHARISMA: n/a
DAMAGE PER ATTACK: Nil
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Domination
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Immune to physical damage
MAGIC RESISTANCE: See below

### Combat

Praskovia Voronov is an odem, an evil undead spirit that can take control of the living in order to work her will on the world. As a spirit, she is normally invisible, though to adepts able to perceive the invisible she appears as a white, vaporous cloud. She cannot

speak except when in control of a host, when she speaks Russian in a loud, blustery voice.

When she is not in control of a body, Voronov does not engage in combat and is immune to most attacks. In this state, only spells such as *banishment* or *dismissal* can affect her (and then only if the spellcaster has some means of seeing the invisible spirit), driving her from the area. She cannot be turned or harmed by any other physical or magical attack.

Voronov's most deadly ability, of course, is her power to dominate a body, taking control completely away from the body's owner. She does this by entering an orifice of the body—mouth, nose, or ear—and, in effect, binding the person's mind and spirit, making him helpless though still aware. She then uses the body to stir up as much anger and conflict as she can, blustering in her loud Russian voice, pushing and provoking others, and generally stirring up trouble.

While in possession of a body, Praskovia is immune to most magic. A *wish* or *magic jar* can drive her from the body, but other mind-affecting magic is useless against her. Other spells and weapons can harm the possessed body, but even the death of the body does not harm the odem, simply forcing it to find a new victim. There is one additional, unique way to expel Praskovia from a body she has possessed: if one of the silver wedding crowns kept in St. Michael's cathedral in Sitka is held over the head of the possessed victims, Praskovia cannot remain in the body.

### Lair

Praskovia's body is buried in the Russian cemetery on the west side of Sitka. Though her spirit is essentially nomadic, she has certain additional powers within the cemetery and it is treated as her lair for all purposes. Within the graveyard, Praskovia can use an *emotion* spell at will, and can also *animate dead* once per day, calling forth nine skeletons from the graves around her.

### Background

Praskovia Voronov was, in life, the wife of a prominent member of the Russian colony of New Archangel, which became Sitka upon the transfer of Alaska to the U.S. A bitter and hateful person by all accounts, Praskovia desperately wanted to return to Russia when the U.S. soldiers arrived to take possession, but her husband, Arkady, forced her to remain with him. Arkady, a much more optimistic and idealistic person than his wife, was outspoken in his criticism of the rowdy American soldiers and protested loudly to their commander on several occasions. Praskovia, unfortunately, bore the brunt of the retribution leveled by the soldiers.

One night while Arkady was away at a protest meeting, a group of soldiers broke into the Voronov house, then tortured and killed Praskovia. Arkady, in his grief, tried to swim out to a French ship that was anchored near the city, seeking asylum and transport back to Russia, but he drowned in the cold water. Praskovia's spirit could not rest, and she became an odem, possessing human victims in order to feed on the emotions of hot anger—since it is her own anger and frustration that sustain her spirit in unlife.

*After several years of enduring rejections, revisions, and long waits for publication of articles that have been accepted, James Wyatt is finally becoming one of the regular contributors to DRAGON® Magazine and DUNGEON® Adventures. Maybe now he'll stop following us around at conventions.*

2 Voronova was inspired by the character of the same name in James Michener's novel, *Alaska*, but the two characters have very little in common. See also "Mysterious Cities" in *DRAGON Magazine* #240.

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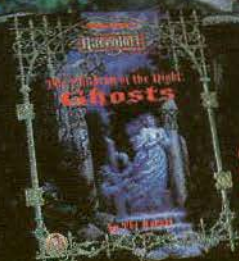


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# Afterword

## A Glimpse at TSR in 1998

Greetings adventurers! Dave thought it would be a good idea if I wrote a short overview of some of the great stuff we have planned for 1998 and beyond. So here goes!

### The ALTERNITY™ Game

Of course we're very excited about the upcoming release of the ALTERNITY game, which will be our big push into science fiction roleplaying. By the time the ALTERNITY game is released in May of 1998, we will have worked on it for nearly three years. This is not something that was slapped together to go after the obvious sci-fi gap in the market. We took our time and even released a preview version of the game to get your feedback before the formal launch. The response has been overwhelmingly positive, and now we're ready to go forward with the full line. We plan to use a product format that's similar to what has worked so well for the AD&D® game, with the ALTERNITY game itself serving as a core set of rules suitable for any modern or science fiction setting, and *Star Drive* will be the first campaign setting that we publish and support. With talent like Bill Slavicsek, Rich Baker, and Kim Mohan on this project, you won't be disappointed with the results.

### The Return of Greyhawk

Another exciting release that jumps right off the catalog at you is the return of the GREYHAWK® setting! Yes, the original roleplaying campaign of the great Gary Gygax himself returns to a store near you, starting with *Return of the Eight* in June of 1998. Following immediately thereafter will be the *Player's Guide to Greyhawk*, the primary campaign setting product, in July. Of course there will be a regular release of GREYHAWK support products after that. I want to thank all the GREYHAWK fans who sent me email expressing their support and enthusiasm through their "Save the Oerth!" campaign.

### MARVEL® Super Heroes

We are very proud to announce the release of our MARVEL roleplaying game. This will be a completely new treatment of roleplaying in the exciting Marvel universe, this time using the award-winning SAGA® system which has been so successful with our DRAGONLANCE® line. So get ready, it's clobberin' time!

### AD&D® Campaigns

Of course, none of this diminishes our enthusiasm for the ongoing efforts in the lines we already have up and running. The FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting will keep growing bigger and better, the RAVENLOFT® setting will become scarier, the BIRTHRIGHT® campaign will be coming back better than ever with a relaunch in the summer, and fans of the DRAGONLANCE setting will watch with anticipation as the next chapter of Krynn begins to unfold. With the core AD&D® line, we will continue to provide exciting adventures suitable for any fantasy roleplaying setting; in particular we're going to try a new concept for the line—a mini-series! The *Island of Jakandor* will be released as a three-part adventure and source book. Check it out, and let us know what you think of this approach.

### Electronic Gaming

One of the biggest opportunities for us to make your role-playing experience more exciting is to take advantage of the electronic media. We don't plan on creating computer games ourselves—we'll leave that market for the electronic game companies that know how to do that so well—but we would like to develop some CD ROM products that directly support the true roleplaying experience. The first product in this series was the CD ROM Core Rules product, which was released in 1996. As we've continued to work with this product and use it in our own campaigns, we've started to develop a vision for this product to evolve as the ultimate roleplaying toolbox for Dungeon Masters and players. There are so many exciting enhancements that can be made to the character generators, map makers, and so on that we don't really see an end in sight to how excellent a tool this can become. So our strategy with this product is to continue to enhance it, releasing new versions on an annual or semi-annual basis according to what you tell us you'd like to see in it. And we'll develop an upgrade program so that when new versions come out, you won't have to pay full price, just as you'd expect with any software application expected to have a long life. You'll see in our product catalog that version 2 of this product is anticipated for summer of '98. If you have ideas for version 3, let us know. We'd love to hear your thoughts!

We have some ideas for some other CD ROM products as well. Wouldn't it be great if there were a FORGOTTEN REALMS atlas and encyclopedia on a CD ROM? Or some great tools for playing RPGs on the internet? Or if we could help you put your campaign on a web site and connect it to ours? While we certainly don't believe that electronic products will ever take the place of face-to-face roleplaying, we do believe a set of well-designed electronic products could add a fascinating dimension to the game.

### The RPGA® Network

Last but not least, let's not forget the ROLE PLAYING GAMES ASSOCIATION® (RPGA) Network. As anyone who's familiar with Wizards of the Coast knows, we're big believers in organized play programs. We have huge plans for the Network, including a focus on getting retailers involved. If you're not a member, now's the perfect time to sign up, 'cause we're ready to play!

Stay on target,

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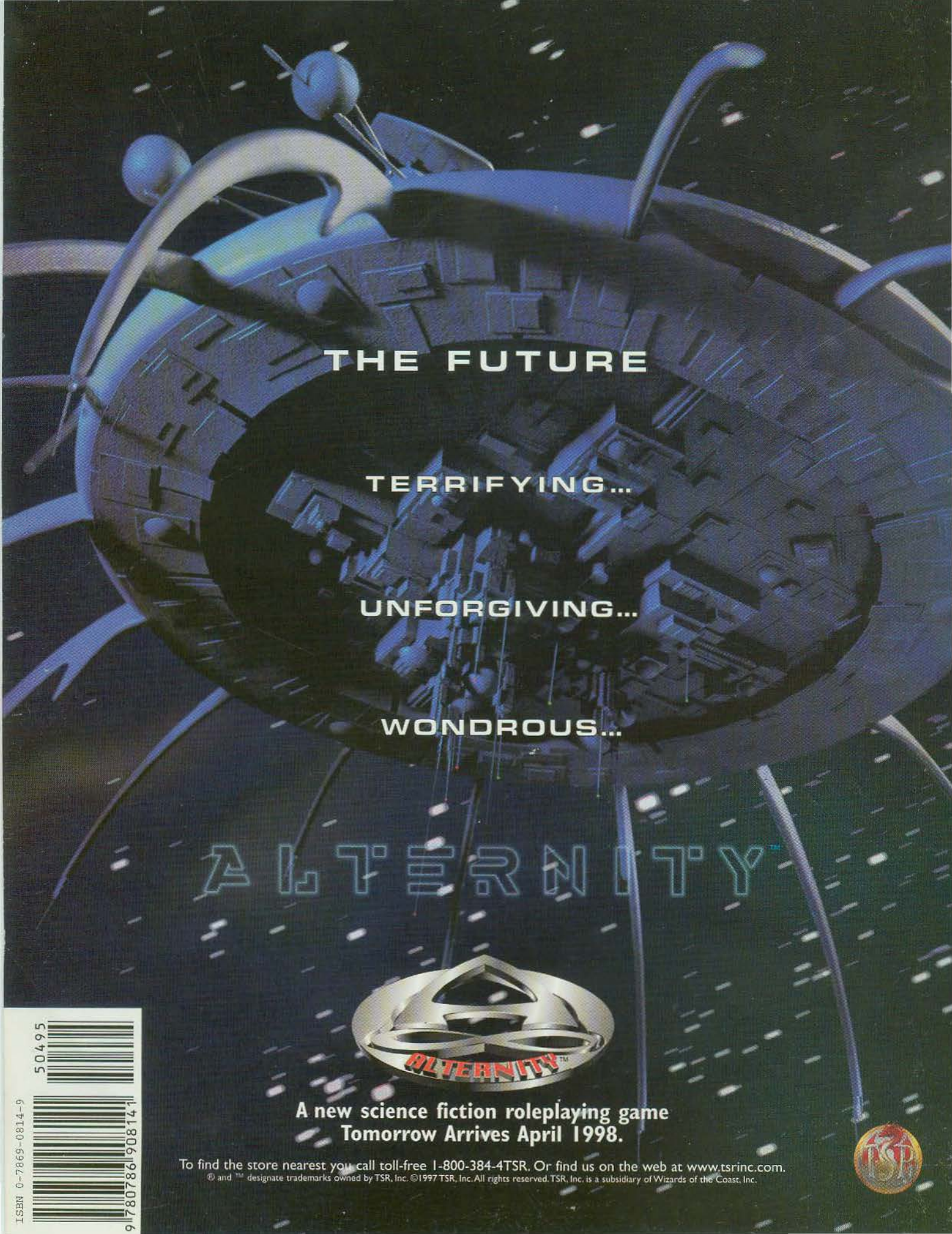


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